



Department
for Education

Children looked after by local authorities in England

**Guide to the SSDA903 collection 1 April 2016
to 31 March 2017**

November 2015

Contact details:

For general enquiries please raise a [service request](#).

Please share this guide

We would like everyone who collects information for our statistical return to have access to a copy of this guide and the associated validation rules. Both these documents can be downloaded from the [department's website](#).

Contents

Introduction	7
Summary of main changes for 2016 to 2017	7
Version history	8
Part 1: overview of the SSDA903 collection	9
1.1 Purpose of the SSDA903 return	9
1.2 History of the collection	9
1.3 Completing the SSDA903 return	10
1.4 Loading data	10
1.5 Amending data	10
1.6 Validation checks and rejected records	11
1.6.1 Checks which are applied	11
1.6.2 Time limits in SSDA903 validation checks	11
1.7 Definitions used within this guide	12
1.7.1 Child	12
1.7.2 Looked after	13
1.7.3 Provision of accommodation	14
1.7.4 Continuous period of more than 24 hours	14
1.7.5 Care order	14
1.7.6 An 'episode' on the SSDA903	15
1.7.7 When to record a new episode	15
1.7.8 Period of care	16
1.7.9 Starting to be looked after	17
1.7.10 Ceasing to be looked after	17
1.8 Children included or excluded	18
1.8.1 Children included on the SSDA903	18
1.8.2 Children excluded from the SSDA903	19
1.8.3 'Section 25' children	20
1.8.4 Children in custody	21
1.8.5 Joint funding	21
1.8.6 If a young woman who is looked after has a baby, is the baby automatically looked after?	22

1.8.7	Unaccompanied asylum seekers (UASC) on the SSDA903	22
1.8.8	Children on bail or on remand	25
1.9	Respite care	26
1.9.1	Coding 'respite care' for children under care orders	28
1.9.2	Respite breaks in hospital or other specialist NHS facilities	28
Part 2: Data items collected via the SSDA903 return		30
2.1	Header information – to be collected for all children	34
2.1.1	Child identifier	34
2.1.2	Gender	34
2.1.3	Date of birth	34
2.1.4	Ethnic origin code	35
2.1.5	Unique pupil number (UPN)	38
2.1.6	Motherhood status	39
2.1.7	Date of birth of mother's child	40
2.2	Episode information	41
2.2.1	Date episode commenced	41
2.2.2	Reason for new episode of care	41
2.2.3	Legal status	43
2.2.4	Category of need code	50
2.2.5	Home postcode	51
2.2.6	Placement postcode	52
2.2.7	Placement unique reference number (URN)	55
2.2.8	Placement type	56
2.2.9	Placement provider	70
2.2.10	Date episode ceased	72
2.2.11	Reason episode ceased	73
2.2.12	Reason for placement change	75
2.3	Review information	81
2.3.1	Date of each statutory review	81
2.3.2	Method of participation in each review	82
2.4	Unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC)	84
2.4.1	UASC status	84

2.4.2	Date UASC status ceased	84
2.5	Adoptions (AD1)	84
2.5.1	Purpose of items collected relating to children adopted from care	84
2.5.2	Children for whom these data items should be completed	85
2.5.3	Validation	85
2.5.4	Stages of an adoption	85
2.5.5	How should a S84 order for a child adopted outside England be recorded? And what if they subsequently return to be looked after in England?	85
2.5.6	Special guardianship orders	86
2.5.7	Dates	86
2.5.8	Date of decision child should be placed for adoption	87
2.5.9	Date of matching child and prospective adopters	87
2.5.10	Whether child adopted by former foster carers	87
2.5.11	Number of adopters	87
2.5.12	Gender of adopters	88
2.5.13	Legal status of adopters	88
2.6	Children who should/should no longer be placed for adoption	88
2.6.1	Date of decision that the child should be placed for adoption	89
2.6.2	Date of decision that the child should no longer be placed for adoption	89
2.6.3	Reason why the child should no longer be placed for adoption	89
2.7	Return to care after or during previous permanent arrangement	90
2.7.1	Previous permanence option	90
2.7.2	Local authority code where previous permanence option was arranged	91
2.7.3	Date of order	91
2.8	Children missing from care	92
2.8.1	Missing	92
2.8.2	Missing episode start date	92
2.8.3	Missing episode end date	93
2.9	OC2 (to be collected for children continuously looked after for 12 months at 31 March)	93
2.9.1	Merging the OC2 return into the SSDA903	93
2.9.2	Background to the OC2 return	94
2.9.3	Children covered by this return	94

2.9.4	Child convicted during the year	95
2.9.5	Health surveillance checks up to date	95
2.9.6	Immunisations up to date	96
2.9.7	Teeth checked by a dentist	97
2.9.8	Annual health assessment up to date	97
2.9.9	Child identified as having a substance misuse problem	98
2.9.10	Child received intervention for substance misuse problem	98
2.9.11	Child offered intervention for substance misuse problem	99
2.9.12	Strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) score	99
2.9.13	Reason for not submitting SDQ score	100
2.10	OC3 (care leaver's information)	101
2.10.1	Purpose of additional data items for children who have recently left care	101
2.10.2	Young people for whom this information is required	101
2.10.3	Local authority in touch	103
2.10.4	Contact through a third party	105
2.10.5	Main activity	105
2.10.6	Accommodation	108
2.10.7	Suitability	109
Appendix 1: When childhood immunisations are due		111
Appendix 2: Substance misuse		113
Appendix 3: Guidance on data collection on the emotional health of looked after children		117

Introduction

This document gives guidance on the completion and submission of the SSDA903 statistical return in England for the 2016 to 2017 year.

An SSDA903 return should be completed for every child who is looked after during the course of the year ending 31 March 2017 and for a group of former looked after children whose 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th or 21st birthdays fell during the year.

Further copies of these notes may be freely distributed and copied. A downloadable version of this document and the associated validation rules are available on the [department's website](#).

Summary of main changes for 2016 to 2017

There are no changes being made to the SSDA903 return for the year 2016 to 2017.

Version history

1.0	October 2015	First website version
1.1	November 2015	Minor text clarification, sections 1.7.1 and 1.4

This document is version 1.1.

Part 1: overview of the SSDA903 collection

1.1 Purpose of the SSDA903 return

The aim of the SSDA903 return is to collect information about children who are looked after by local authorities during the year ending 31 March 2017; and for those who have recently left care, information as to their whereabouts on their 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th or 21st birthday.

An SSDA903 return is required for two groups of children:

- Every child who is looked after by your local authority at any time during the year ending 31 March 2017;
- Relevant and former relevant young people whose 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th or 21st birthday falls within the collection period. For the 2016 to 2017 collection, this therefore covers young people whose date of birth fell between 1 April 1995 and 31 March 2000.

For children who were looked after during the year, the information relates to their placement, legal status and adoption from care (where appropriate). For those who have recently left care, the information required relates to their current activity and accommodation. The purpose of the SSDA903 is to provide the government with the necessary information to evaluate the outcome of policy initiatives and to monitor objectives on looked after children, both during their time in care and on reaching adulthood. The data collected is used in the provision of information for research and statistical information in response to parliamentary questions.

1.2 History of the collection

Before 1998 the SSDA903 collection covered all looked after children. Between 1998 and 2003 the SSDA0903 return covered only a one third sample of children, those with a day of birth divisible by three. There was then an aggregate return, the CLA 100 return, which was used to provide 'fast track' data and to gross the sample data. In 2001, the AD1 (children adopted) returns was introduced and the OC3 return (19th birthday) in 2002. From 2004, the CLA100 return was discontinued as the SSDA903 reverted to covering all looked after children. Becoming a web based data collection for the first time, the SSDA903 return also incorporated the AD1, OC1 and OC3 returns. The OC2 data (outcomes for looked after children) was introduced in 2009, the aggregate OC2 collection was discontinued the following year. Information on timings of adoption decisions was added in 2010. The OC1 data was discontinued in 2012. In 2014 the OC3 cohort was expanded to include all former relevant young people and collect information at their 19th, 20th and 21st birthdays. This was expanded further in 2016 to cover 17th and 18th birthdays.

1.3 Completing the SSDA903 return

The SSDA903 return for 2016 to 2017 will be submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) via the CLA17 application, which will be placed on the internet by 1 April 2017 and local authorities will be advised in good time as to the web page location and log in procedures.

Local authorities are required to enter all their data by 31 May 2017 and clear all errors signing off their return by 30 June 2017. Local authorities need to let DfE know when this task has been completed. It will not be possible to sign the return off when errors are outstanding. Delays in returning the submission will delay the finalisation of the statistics and therefore reduce their value to both the DfE and to local authorities. Information on how to use the children looked after application can be accessed by the help function in the CLA17 application on the internet.

1.4 Loading data

Data can either be entered manually directly onto the screen, or data may be entered electronically, either via xml files or csv files. Guidance for the submission of SSDA903 data in electronic format are set out in the technical specification available on the website. The submission must be in the form of either:

- one XML file, or
- a number of CSV files (the number depending on whether there are any unaccompanied asylum seeker children (UASC) looked after during the year).

1.5 Amending data

Records for 2016 to 2017 may either be amended manually or electronically by deleting and then re-loading the files in the form of a re-submission. Local Authorities can manually amend their own records for previous years (all years between the 2003 to 2004 collection and the 2015 to 2016 collection) but they cannot do this by deleting and reloading in the form of a re-submission.

Historical records prior to the 2003 to 2004 collection requiring correction can only be corrected by DfE. We cannot accept emails containing child level information, please note that this includes emails sent from GCSX accounts. All amendments should be sent to DfE using the secure s2s system, this is the only way that child level information can be transferred to the department. Once you have sent the file on s2s please raise a service request using the link on the cover of this guide and inform us of the name of the file.

1.6 Validation checks and rejected records

The children looked after data form an important information resource, and DfE attaches a high priority to improving and maintaining the accuracy of this data. The validation checks are designed to identify possible errors by checking records for internal consistency, as well as maintaining the integrity of each child history over time by checking each year's submission with previous records.

1.6.1 Checks which are applied

When the SSDA903 returns are initially submitted, the DfE computer system submits each record to a series of checks that are designed to identify, and reject:

- unlikely or impossible combinations of legal status and placement;
- unlikely or impossible sequences of dates;
- information which contradicts that already held about the child, in particular details submitted for the beginning of the current year which do not match those at the end of the previous year;
- information in the supplementary milestone fields that contradicts details recorded in the episode date for the same child.

Any record which fails any of the validation checks will be shown as being in error and will need correcting. An explanation of each validation check and guidance on how to make corrections will be provided in the document 'SSDA903 Validation checks for 1 April 2016 onwards'. Local Authorities will be notified as soon as this is available.

Child histories across years

The data which has been collected on the SSDA903 since 1992 is particularly valuable since it provides a complete care history of every looked after child. This cumulative dataset forms a unique and valuable resource which steadily becomes more valuable as the years go by because it allows analyses of time-trends in the way children are looked after and their pattern of care. This is why we are concerned that individual SSDA903 records show consistent episode details from year to year, and DfE applies cross-year validation checks when processing each year's submissions.

1.6.2 Time limits in SSDA903 validation checks

The SSDA903 validation checks are not intended to be a method of supervising or controlling legal or social work practice; they are merely designed to identify and query

statistical data which are likely to be in error. Hence some time limits are drawn more loosely in the validations than a strict adherence to the law would require.

If, for the sake of example, a child had an 'emergency protection order' (EPO) legal status for one day longer than the law allows, we want this to be accurately shown on the SSDA903 collection. We do not want local authority colleagues to 'doctor' records with false dates in order to squeeze them into legally prescribed time limits. Fully accurate and reliable statistical data is the priority. If there was, for example, a national trend for EPOs to slightly exceed the statutory time limit, accurate statistics could usefully reflect this and bring this trend to light.

On the other hand (to take the theoretical example cited above), EPO legal statuses which were recorded as being several days longer than the statutory limit would be more likely to be a result of coding errors or missing episodes on the SSDA903. The presence of the validation error on the child record means that this should be checked and any coding error or missing episodes rectified. If, after checking, the data is found to be accurate please raise a service request.

1.7 Definitions used within this guide

1.7.1 Child

A 'child' is anyone aged under 18 and the words 'child' and 'children' are used in this sense throughout this guide. In the vast majority of cases, children cease to be looked after on their 18th birthday.

On reaching their 18th birthday, the status of these young people changes; they cease to be looked after children, and become young adults eligible for help and assistance from the local authority. Such help and assistance is usually provided in accordance with the various "after care" provisions of the Children Act (eg section 24). For this group of children the episode should be closed on the child's 18th birthday and the episode ceased code which most accurately reflects the destination of the child should be chosen.

Exception

Young people may be accommodated by a local authority until their 21st birthday if they are in a community home which is suitable for children aged 16 and over. In practice these are few in number, and tend to be young persons with severe physical or mental disabilities. See Children Act 1989, Section 20(5).

Care details for young people aged over 18 years should only be included in this data return if they are placed in a community home (which is suitable for children over 16), and if the local authority considers that it would be in the child's best interest for it to remain (i.e. to do so would safeguard or promote the child's welfare). This small group of children will have a legal status of V2 and a placement code of K2. We understand that they are generally young people with special needs who are not ready at 18 to live on their own in independent accommodation, and that most of them transfer to adult services in due course.

1.7.2 Looked after

The term 'looked after' has a specific, legal meaning, based on the Children Act 1989, and it is intended that the SSDA903 collection should follow this definition as closely as possible. There are a few exceptions, which have been introduced purely for statistical purposes and wherever these occur appropriate guidance is given in order to achieve consistency and comparability of data between local authorities.

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked after by a local authority if he or she falls into one of the following:

- is provided with accommodation, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours, [Children Act 1989, Section 20 and 21]
- is subject to a care order [Children Act 1989, Part IV]
- is subject to a placement order

It is possible that a placement order is made without a care order or interim care order being made, or the child not being subject to section 20 of the 1989 Act. For example the local authority working with a family and believing that the child should be removed and be placed for adoption. The local authority does not have to apply for a care order first (though this would be the usual situation) and then a placement order; it could apply simply for a placement order.

1.7.3 Provision of accommodation

Local authorities can provide children with accommodation under a wide range of circumstances, for example:

- as the result of an agreement between the local authority and the child's parents or guardians that being accommodated would be in the child's best interest;
- the child having been remanded to the care of a local authority by a criminal court;
- because the child is helping the police with their enquiries;
- the child has been placed for adoption, and the local authority is acting as the adoption agency;
- the child is subject to a police protection order.

In all these examples, the child will be subject to a different legal status, and the circumstances will be very different. However, in every case, the child is being looked after under the terms of the act because he/she is being accommodated.

1.7.4 Continuous period of more than 24 hours

Section 22 of the Children Act stipulates very clearly that for a child to be looked after by a local authority, he/she needs to be accommodated for a continuous period of more than 24 hours. Periods of being looked after of less than 24 hours in total must not be recorded on the SSDA903.

Exception

The only exception to the rule that for a child to be looked after is that he/she needs to be accommodated for a continuous period of more than 24 hours relates to children with a legal status of V3 (short term breaks when each break is being recorded as an individual episode). For statistical purposes, information is required for this group of children for periods of less than 24 hours duration, providing the periods include an overnight stay.

For further information on the recording of data for children being looked after under a series of short term breaks see section 1.9 of this Guide.

1.7.5 Care order

A child is looked after when subject to a care order. There are no exceptions to this rule. In these circumstances however, there is no obligation for the local authority to accommodate the child. For example, a child under a care order can be placed with their parents or other relative. [Also see paragraph 1.7.2]

A care order continues in force until either:

- it is discharged by a court
- the child reaches his/her 18th birthday
- child leaves care through an adoption order, special guardianship order or child arrangements order

A local authority cannot unilaterally end a care order, and therefore a child, once subject to a care order, will remain looked after until one of the above events occurs. However, when a placement order is made the care order no longer has effect but is reactivated if the placement order is revoked.

1.7.6 An 'episode' on the SSDA903

For the purposes of entering data onto the SSDA903, the period of time during which a child is looked after by the local authority is broken down into "episodes" of care. Each episode represents a period of being looked after under the same legal status and in the same placement. When either the legal status or the child's placement changes a new episode must begin. Episodes must involve at least an overnight stay, which means in effect that an episode cannot start and end on the same day.

1.7.7 When to record a new episode

A new episode should be started:

- every time a child starts to be looked after
- when there is a change of legal status code. The renewal of an on-going legal status does not require a new episode
- When there is a change of placement. There are certain circumstances, where the change of placement is a temporary placement, where a placement change does not need to be recorded on the SSDA903 record (see notes on 'temporary placements' in the placement section of this guide (page 64)).

Where a single open episode continues unchanged from year to year, a record must still be submitted every year for that child. The actual date the episode commenced should be recorded, but the date and reason the episode ceased should be left blank if that episode is still open on 31 March.

It is unlikely, although possible, for a child to cease to be looked after and start again on the same day. The way to record this depends on the circumstances of the child. If the circumstances of the child have not changed significantly, then the brief period of not being looked after can be ignored (ie both periods should be treated as one continuous

period). A new episode will be required if the placement of the child changes from one period to the next. If on the other hand, the circumstances of the second period of care are quite different from the first, requiring at least a new children in need (CIN) code, and possibly a new legal status, then it is necessary to record the break in care on the SSDA903 record. To do this the child should be shown to have started the second period on the following day. This is of course not entirely accurate, but it is only one day in the full care history of the child, whose record in all other respects will be an accurate reflection of his or her time in local authority care.

Periods of accommodation under PACE for less than 24 hours should not be recorded on the SSDA903. Local authorities may wish to record such periods on local databases for local management purposes, but these should not be included in SSDA903 records submitted to DfE. 'Doctoring' of such periods to make them appear to start on one day and finish on the next, so that they will pass DfE validations, should not be considered.

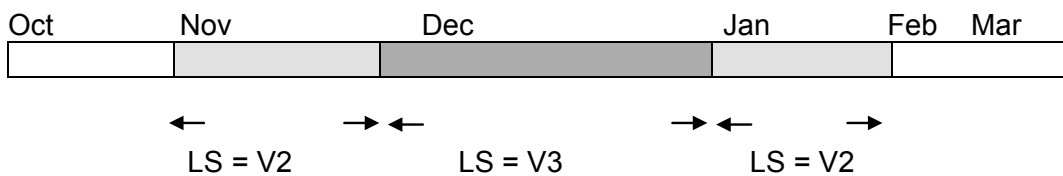
If a child is transferred to your local authority from the care of another local authority, the date the first episode commenced is the date the child started to be looked after by your authority. This is because we do not link child histories between different local authorities.

1.7.8 Period of care

Episodes of care are "building blocks" for a period of care, which is defined as a period during which a child is continuously looked after by a local authority. Such periods consist of one or more episodes, and their total duration must exceed 24 hours. A period of care can involve one or more placements, and consists of one or more periods of legal status. The legal statuses of the episodes within any period must be either:

- anything other than being looked after in a series of short term placements (ie not in respite care, codes V3 or V4); or
- V3 or V4 (but not both).

If a child receiving respite care (legal status codes V3 or V4) becomes subject to any other legal status, that period of care effectively ceases and a new one begins. However, for recording purposes, this is only entered as a legal status change, since there is no actual break in the child's care. Similarly when a child being looked after under any legal status other than V3 or V4 becomes subject to a respite agreement, a new period of care will commence, even if there is no intervening period between the two events. In the following example, the care history of the child, although unbroken, will consist of three periods of care.



In summary, it follows from the above that a period of care begins when either:

- the child starts to be looked after; or
- the legal status of the child changes from 'respite' to 'non-respite'; or
- the legal status of the child changes from 'non-respite' to 'respite'.

and ends when either:

- the legal status changes from "respite" to "non-respite"; or
- the legal status changes from "non-respite" to "respite"; or
- the child ceases to be looked after, and either returns to the care of his/her parents or guardian or, if aged 18 or over, either lives independently or transfers to the care of adult social services.

1.7.9 Starting to be looked after

Because "respite care", as described in section 1.9 of this guide, constitutes a special group of children, it is normal practice in virtually all SSDA903 outputs to exclude them from counts of looked after children. Counts of children starting to be looked after is no exception, and therefore the term "Starting to be looked after" is defined as the commencement of a new "non-respite" period of care, ie those periods of care defined under the first two bullet points above.

1.7.10 Ceasing to be looked after

Similarly, for SSDA903 purposes ceasing to be looked after is defined as the cessation of a "non-respite" period of care. Counts of children ceasing to be looked after exclude periods of care which contain legal statuses V3 or V4, ie those periods of care defined under the last two bullet points above.

Calculation of figures for looked after children - If you take the total number of children looked after at 31 March, add the next year's 'starting' figure and subtract the next year's 'ceasing' figure, should the result match the total figure for the following 31 March?

The result of this calculation will rarely reconcile exactly with a total figure for the following 31 March (which is produced by a count of all children looked after on that day);

it will, however, be a close approximation. The reason the calculation is unlikely to be exact is because some children have more than one separate spell of being looked after during the year. For statistical purposes we only count the first admission if a child started to be looked after more than once, and we only count the last discharge if a child ceased to be looked after more than once.

In practice, however, analysis shows that the number of children who start more than once or cease more than once in the year is relatively small; and that the various patterns of care which result from such children tend to balance each other out. This means that a projected 31 March figure calculated in this way is likely to be a very close approximation to the actual figure reached by a count of all children looked after at 31 March. For example, the total number of children looked after in England at 31 March 1999, as reported by local authorities, is within 1.5% of a projected total figure which can be calculated by taking the figure for the previous 31 March, adding all the reported starts in the year, and subtracting all the reported leavers.

1.8 Children included or excluded

1.8.1 Children included on the SSDA903

The following groups of children will all be included on the SSDA903 return:

- Children who receive a pattern of short breaks or short term placements, under the terms of an agreement, but who otherwise live at home. These are sometimes called 'Family Link' or 'Shared Care' schemes (for more information about this special group of children and how they should be recorded on the SSDA903 see Section 1.9 of this Guide);
- Children who are placed for adoption by the local authority. This is a separate placement status and must be recorded as such. The child does not cease to be looked after until an adoption order has been made
- Children aged 16 or 17 who are in semi-independent accommodation or other transitional settings in preparation for leaving care. Their looked-after status and the date they cease to be looked after should be a matter of record in the care plan, and the date of ceasing to be looked after recorded on SSDA903 should reflect this;
- Unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) aged under 18 for whom the local authority conclude, as part of a formal decision-making process, that in order to safeguard and promote the child's welfare they should be looked after. These children are regarded as being "accommodated" by voluntary agreement under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989; they are normally placed in foster or residential care;

- Children in an emergency foster placement with a relative or friend under Regulation 11. This kind of placement can last a maximum of 42 days;
- Children remanded to local authority accommodation as a result of an order imposed by the youth court in criminal proceedings. (This is not the same as a Children Act Supervision Order, which is not a looked after status); and
- (Since 3 December 2012, when the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPOA) came into force) children similarly remanded to youth detention accommodation.

1.8.2 Children excluded from the SSDA903

The following groups of children will not be included on the SSDA903. Please note that for some of these children the legal situation may only apply to children prior to 3 December 2012, when the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPOA) came into force.

- Children who are receiving a service, or some other means of support, from social services under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, but are not being accommodated. A number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC), whose assistance from the local authority falls short of being looked after, will fall in this category;
- Young people who have left care and are receiving support under section 24 of the Children Act 1989;
- Children subject to Children Act 1989 Supervision Orders;
- Children subject to Children Act 1989 Residence Orders (used until 22 April 2015);
- Children subject to a child arrangements order;
- Children who have left care because of a special guardianship order;
- Children who have appeared in court and have been 'bailed to reside where the local authority directs', but who are not accommodated by the local authority itself;
- Children who are privately fostered who should instead be recorded on the PF1 return;
- Children who are not looked after by the local authority but who are to be adopted. These applications are usually from step-parents or relatives;

- Children in a long stay hospital if the local authority is not accommodating them, even if they were previously looked after. If they return to foster care/children's home on discharge they will resume being looked after.

The following are also not looked after (and therefore do not appear on the SSDA903), except when subject to a concurrent care order.

- Children subject to a Detention and Training Orders, S 73 Crime and Disorder Act 1998;
- Children detained under Sections 90 to 92 of the Powers of the Criminal Courts Act 2000, even if they are placed in local authority accommodation.

1.8.3. 'Section 25' children

Section 25 of the Children Act refers to the granting by a Family Proceedings Court of a secure accommodation order, to authorise the continued placement of a child in secure accommodation for more than 72 hours. The main groups of children in secure units subject to a Section 25 order are:

- Children who are likely to cause injury to themselves or others if placed in any other type of accommodation;
- Children being remanded to local authority accommodation awaiting trial, or awaiting sentence following conviction (s23(1) CYPA 1969 and s21 CA 1989);
- Children detained under PACE, who are helping the police with their enquiries, prior to either being charged or released.

For all these children, a local authority is required to show that the child has a history of absconding, and is likely to abscond further, before a Section 25 order is granted. If this cannot be demonstrated, the child will be placed in a less restricted environment.

All of the above three groups are looked after children by virtue of the fact that they are being accommodated in local authority accommodation, but Section 25 does not in itself constitute a "looked after" legal status. There must be a separate, concurrent legal status (for example that the child is already the subject of a care order, or interim care order (ICO) under section 31 of the Children Act; the child is accommodated by the local authority under section 20 or the child is remanded by the youth court under the provision of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act underpinning the fact that the child is being looked after, and this is the legal status that would be recorded on the SSDA903. The appropriate placement code would be K1.

Other groups of children who may be accommodated in a secure unit are:

- Children serving all or part of a court ordered sentence in a secure unit. Generally speaking these are teenagers who have been convicted of a crime, but for whom detention in a Young Offenders Institution is considered inappropriate or detrimental to their welfare;
- Children being held in secure remand on order of a criminal court, awaiting trial, or awaiting sentence following conviction (s97/8 Criminal and Disorder Act 1998) (see Section 1.8.4 of this Guide).

No Section 25 order is required for either of these two groups, as in both cases the decision that the child needs to be placed in a secure unit has been taken by a criminal court. The first group are not looked after, unless they were subject to a Care Order prior to being charged; and the second group are not looked after unless they have been placed in local authority accommodation.

1.8.4 Children in custody

Prior to 3 December 2012, the situation regarding children sentenced to custody was:

- The status of these children would depend on whether or not the child was the subject of a care order. If the child, prior to sentence, was subject to a care order then this child would remain looked after.
- If a child was being looked after under section 20, the child would cease to be looked after as they would be accommodated by the juvenile secure estate and not by the local authority.

The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPOA), received royal assent in May 2012. This creates a new custodial remand framework for 12-17 year olds who are charged with or convicted of a criminal offence or concerned in extradition proceedings. From 3 December 2012, all children (ie young people up to age 18) who are remanded to youth detention accommodation as a result of being charged with or convicted of an offence will be 'looked after' by the designated local authority.

1.8.5. Joint funding

The term 'joint funding' is taken to mean a placement which is jointly funded from two or more sources (such as a placement in a special school funded both by social services and the local authority). So long as the child is looked after it will be subject to the normal rules of placement and legal status, regardless of where the funding is coming from.

It is not the purpose of this statistical guide to pre-empt decisions which are part of social work practice, as to which children are to be looked after. Whether a child is looked after

should be a practice issue determined locally depending on the child's circumstances and on welfare grounds, in accordance with the provisions of the Children Act.

The fact that a child is looked after will clearly be a matter of record, as such a status has various implications (typically: drawing up a care plan, inclusion on a placement register, allocation of a social worker, carrying out of reviews). Our concern from the statistical point of view is to ensure that when an authority has identified any child as looked-after, he or she is correctly recorded as such in local records, and on the statistical returns which are derived from these records.

1.8.6 If a young woman who is looked after has a baby, is the baby automatically looked after?

This is a decision for social work practitioners, based on the circumstances, and the welfare of the child. The statistics should simply reflect whatever decision has been made.

1.8.7 Unaccompanied asylum seekers (UASC) on the SSSDA903

Asylum seekers aged under 18 who are receiving child services from a local authority need to be considered in two groups:

- accompanied asylum seekers;
- unaccompanied asylum seekers (UASC).

The first group will be treated in exactly the same way as any other child in need, and local authorities will take decisions as to whether or not they become looked after in the same way as they would assess any other child. If they become "looked after", then they will need to be shown on the SSSDA903, and the 903 coding of these children will be the same as for any other. The Need code in these circumstances is likely to be N7 (Low income), but any of the codes in the range N1 to N6 might apply, depending on the circumstances of the child.

For children in the second group it is important to distinguish between those children who are being looked after on the basis that they are being accommodated by the local authority, and those children who are only receiving assistance under s17 of the Children's Act for accommodation and subsistence costs. Only those UASC who are actually being accommodated are looked after within the meaning of the act, and need to be shown on the SSSDA903.

There are no special rules for recording UASC on the SSSDA903, any UASC who is looked after should be recorded on the SSSDA903, in virtually every respect, as any other looked after child. However, in order to achieve consistency across the country in the

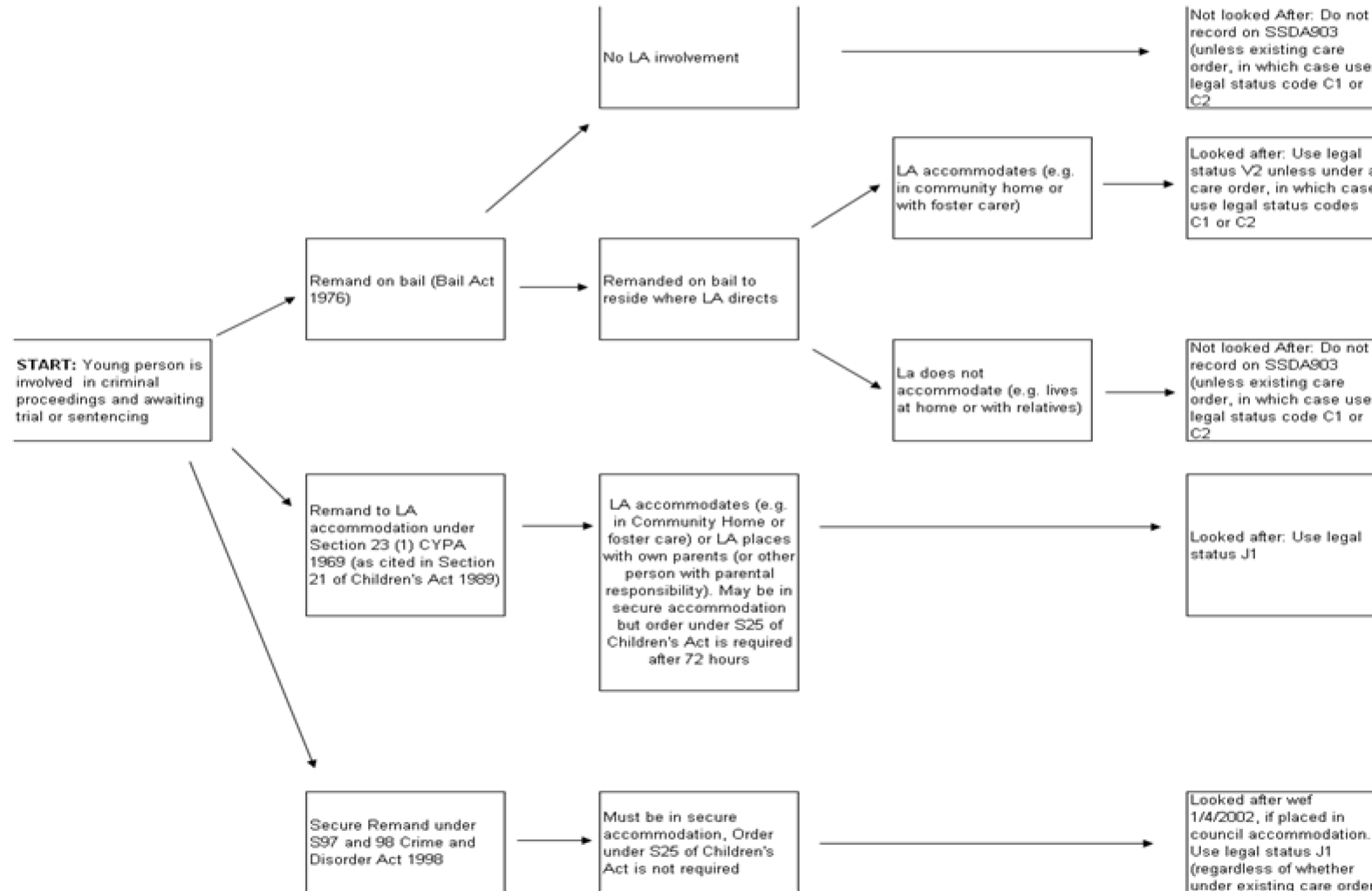
way this special group of children is held in our database, local authorities are requested to follow the following points:

- Ethnic Origin code - local authorities should, as a first step, ask the child which of the standard Ethnic Origin codes they feel best describes their origin. If this is not possible, the authority should code the child in accordance with its country of origin, coupled with their own observations;
- Reason for New Episode code - on entering care this code should be S (started to be looked after);
- The initial legal status - This should be shown as V2 (single period of accommodation under s.20), and any subsequent changes (eg to a care order) should be recorded in the usual way as any other change of legal status;
- CIN codes - In the majority of cases, the appropriate CIN code for unaccompanied asylum seekers will be code N8 (absent parenting);
- Placement codes - The placement of unaccompanied asylum seekers (UASC) should be coded in exactly the same way as the placement of other looked after children. In most cases the appropriate code will be K2, or P2, although other codes are possible. If unaccompanied children are placed in a residential site for asylum seekers, code H5 (hostels and other supportive residential settings) should be used;
- Period of looked after care - if the period of looked after care ceases because the child has left the country, for any reason, then code E16 (child moved abroad) should be used. If the period of looked after care ceases for any other reason, then the most appropriate category should be used. In most cases this will be E4 (Returned home to live with parents, relatives, or other person with parental responsibility);
- If the asylum application of a child is rejected, the child should still be considered as looked after until they leave the country;
- If the asylum application is successful, but the child continues with their looked after status, then no changes should be reflected on the SSDA903 form, unless a change in placement or looked after legal status has taken place;
- If the child goes missing from their placement then the following issues should be considered:

Location of Child	Status of Asylum Application	Statistical Treatment of Child
Believed to still be in the country	Active	Child still treated as looked after. Their record should be kept open until their 18 th birthday, when it should be closed using the appropriate reason code.
Believed to still be in the country	Rejected	Child still treated as looked after. Their record should be kept open until their 18 th birthday, when it should be closed using the appropriate reason code.
Believed to have left country	Active	Child still treated as looked after. Their record should be kept open until their 18 th birthday, when it should be closed using reason E16 as above.
Believed to have left country	Rejected	Statistically, these children should no longer be considered as looked after. Code E16 should be used for the reason episode ceased.

1.8.8 Children on bail or on remand

The following diagram illustrates the various coding possibilities on the SSDA903 of children who are either on bail or on remand prior to the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPOA) which came into force on 3 December 2012.



1.9 Respite care

Respite care is the term used to describe children who are subject to short-term break agreements and is also referred to as 'Shared Care' or 'Family Link' placements. Children cared for in this way normally live at home, but are accommodated by a local authority in a pattern of short periods of care in order to give their parents (or guardians) some "respite" from the normal duties of looking after a child. A typical example would be a physically disabled child, who normally lives at home with his/her parents, but who is accommodated by a local authority every weekend.

The breaks (or short term placements) must form part of a regular programme of support agreed between Social Services and the child's parents/guardians. Each break must include at least one night away from home, but cannot exceed 17 days of continuous care. Up to 75 days of accommodation away from home may take place under a single agreement in any twelve-month period.

To note these timings changed in 2012 following the introduction of new legislation, previously these timings were 28 days of continuous care and 120 days within any 12 month period. See volume 2 of the statutory guidance on the Children Act 1989.

These children form a special group, and in order that they can be readily identified, special legal status codes (V3 and V4) are used (see Part 2 for a full definition). Strictly speaking these children are moving in and out of care. Under the terms of the Children Act 1989, they are only actually being looked after for those days (and nights) when they are being accommodated and are not looked after when they are back home with their parents or guardians. The decision to treat these children as a special group is therefore a concession on the part of the department, introduced to ease the burden of administration involved with a child who is endlessly starting and ceasing to be looked after.

Respite children should never be confused with other children (who are not subject to an agreement) but who nevertheless start and cease to be looked after several times during the year for a variety of reasons. Children receiving short term (or respite care) exhibit a number of common characteristics, which are set out below. If the circumstances of a child are such that he/she cannot meet all of these conditions, it should not be treated as being a respite case, but as separate periods of being looked after under legal status V2. Common characteristics of children in receipt of respite care:

- Respite children normally live at home, and over the medium to long term, spend more time with their parents or guardians, than being accommodated by the local authority;

- There is a formal agreement in place which clearly sets out the times or circumstances when the child is to be accommodated, and the placement (either a specific foster carer, or a named residential establishment);
- There must be series of breaks, ie at least two. A “one-off” spell of respite for a child’s parents/guardians is not sufficient for a child to be classified within this group.
- The legal status of these children is always Section 20 of the Children Act 1989. (a child under any other status or order cannot be the subject of a “respite” agreement);
- There are strict limits on the duration of each break, and the total number of days care that is allowed under these arrangements in any one year, as set out in the second paragraph of section 1.9.

It follows from the above, that if a child who is receiving respite care becomes subject to any other legal status than Section 20, the respite agreement must end. It also follows that the placement of the child will be the same for each and every break.

Exception

It is possible that the accommodation usually provided for a respite child is not available on a particular occasion. For example, a child might go to a specific foster carer every weekend but, for two weekends in August, this particular foster carer is away. As a result, for these two weekends the child needs to be placed elsewhere. This is allowable, and the respite status remains intact.

A child who is the subject of an agreement for the provisions of short term placements can be recorded on the SSDA903 in one of two ways. Local authorities may decide which of the following methods is best suited to their needs, although it is important that once the decision has been taken, all children looked after under a series of short term breaks should be recorded in the same way. The two methods are:

- To simply record the existence of agreements using legal status code V4;
- To record each and every short term placement as an individual episode with a legal status V3. This option means that a child who is looked after every weekend under an agreement will generate 52 episodes, all of which will need to be recorded. The advantage of recording short term breaks in this way is

that local authorities will have a precise record of the actual number of days of care each child receives, which may be useful when completing other departmental returns.

Each local authority should ensure they are consistent within years (by choosing to use either V3 or V4 for all their looked after children in a statistical year), but we are happy for local authorities to change their approach between years. In practice, if a local authority wanted to change between using V4 in the 2015 to 2016 collection to V3 in 2016 to 2017 collection, for the 2016 to 2017 collection return any respite agreement open on 31 March 2016 would have to be closed and a new episode started on 1 April 2016 (or whenever the child's next period of being looked after begins) under legal status V3. While we do not like changing a child's history, the change is necessary in order to be consistent within years and respite agreements are excluded from almost all analysis.

1.9.1 Coding 'respite care' for children under care orders

These are children who are under a care order having regular agreed short breaks with a substitute carer or in a residential placement. These children do not follow the criteria set out above for respite children. If a child under a care order were placed at home, but having short breaks with another carer at weekends, the coding would be as follows. The child would be regarded as continuously looked after, usually with a legal status C2 and placement code P1. If the weekend breaks were planned, intentional breaks, and each lasted seven days or less, and the child returned to the established placement, then under our standard coding instructions they could either be ignored for the purposes of the SSDA903 return, or coded using a temporary code (see Part 2, Section 2.2.8 on placement type of this guide). If a break was more than 7 days in duration, or was not a part of an intentional pattern of breaks, it would constitute a separate placement on the SSDA903 although the legal status would remain unchanged so long as the care order continued.

If a child under a care order is not placed at home, but with a foster carer, the same principle would apply. If regular planned short breaks were being taken with another carer or in a children's home, and each break lasted 7 days or less, it can be disregarded, or recorded as a temporary placement, on the SSDA903. If a break was more than 7 days in duration, or was not a part of an intentional pattern of breaks, it would constitute a separate placement on the SSDA903 although the legal status would remain unchanged so long as the care order continued.

1.9.2 Respite breaks in hospital or other specialist NHS facilities

The general position is that if the respite breaks constitute a direct agreement between the hospital or other NHS facility and the child's parents or child's GP, this

does not of itself mean that the child is 'looked after', regardless of whether Social Services gave the parent(s) advice or other assistance which led to this arrangement being set up. A direct arrangement between the hospital or other NHS facility and the parent(s) or would not constitute an agreed series of short term placements as defined in Reg. 13 of the Arrangement for Placement of Children (General) Regulations 1991. It is of course possible for a child in such circumstances to be looked after on other, separate grounds, such as the existence of a care order.

Part 2: Data items collected via the SSDA903 return

The data items collected via the SSDA903 return fall into the following 10 modules:

Part 2: Data items collected via the SSDA903 return	30
2.1 Header information – to be collected for all children	34
2.1.1 Child identifier	34
2.1.2 Gender	34
2.1.3 Date of birth	34
2.1.4 Ethnic origin code	35
2.1.5 Unique pupil number (UPN)	38
2.1.6 Motherhood status	39
2.1.7 Date of birth of mother’s child	40
2.2 Episode information	41
2.2.1 Date episode commenced	41
2.2.2 Reason for new episode of care	41
2.2.3 Legal status	43
2.2.4 Category of need code	50
2.2.5 Home postcode	51
2.2.6 Placement postcode	52
2.2.7 Placement unique reference number (URN)	55
2.2.8 Placement type	56
2.2.9 Placement provider	70
2.2.10 Date episode ceased	72
2.2.11 Reason episode ceased	73
2.2.12 Reason for placement change	75

2.3	Review information	81
2.3.1	Date of each statutory review	81
2.3.2	Method of participation in each review	82
2.4	Unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC)	84
2.4.1	UASC status	84
2.4.2	Date UASC status ceased	84
2.5	Adoptions (AD1)	84
2.5.1	Purpose of items collected relating to children adopted from care	84
2.5.2	Children for whom these data items should be completed	85
2.5.3	Validation	85
2.5.4	Stages of an adoption	85
2.5.5	How should a S84 order for a child adopted outside England be recorded? And what if they subsequently return to be looked after in England?	85
2.5.6	Special guardianship orders	86
2.5.7	Dates	86
2.5.8	Date of decision child should be placed for adoption	87
2.5.9	Date of matching child and prospective adopters	87
2.5.10	Whether child adopted by former foster carers	87
2.5.11	Number of adopters	87
2.5.12	Gender of adopters	88
2.5.13	Legal status of adopters	88
2.6	Children who should/should no longer be placed for adoption	88
2.6.1	Date of decision that the child should be placed for adoption	89
2.6.2	Date of decision that the child should no longer be placed for adoption	89
2.6.3	Reason why the child should no longer be placed for adoption	89

2.7	Return to care after or during previous permanent arrangement	90
2.7.1	Previous permanence option	90
2.7.2	Local authority code where previous permanence option was arranged	91
2.7.3	Date of order	91
2.8	Children missing from care	92
2.8.1	Missing	92
2.8.2	Missing episode start date	92
2.8.3	Missing episode end date	93
2.9	OC2 (to be collected for children continuously looked after for 12 months at 31 March)	93
2.9.1	Merging the OC2 return into the SSDA903	93
2.9.2	Background to the OC2 return	94
2.9.3	Children covered by this return	94
2.9.4	Child convicted during the year	95
2.9.5	Health surveillance checks up to date	95
2.9.6	Immunisations up to date	96
2.9.7	Teeth checked by a dentist	97
2.9.8	Annual health assessment up to date	97
2.9.9	Child identified as having a substance misuse problem	98
2.9.10	Child received intervention for substance misuse problem	98
2.9.11	Child offered intervention for substance misuse problem	99
2.9.12	Strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) score	99
2.9.13	Reason for not submitting SDQ score	100
2.10	OC3 (care leaver's information)	101
2.10.1	Purpose of additional data items for children who have recently left care	101

2.10.2 Young people for whom this information is required	101
2.10.3 Local authority in touch	103
2.10.4 Contact through a third party	105
2.10.5 Main activity	105
2.10.6 Accommodation	108
2.10.7 Suitability	109
Appendix 1: When childhood immunisations are due	111
Appendix 2: Substance misuse	113
Appendix 3: Guidance on data collection on the emotional health of looked after children	117

2.1 Header information – to be collected for all children

This part of the record details the child's identity and should be completed for every record. Once these items have been entered into the DfE system for a particular child, any subsequent change (eg because data previously submitted was incorrect) will cause a validation error.

2.1.1 Child identifier

This must be a unique ID for each child (no longer than 10 characters) and should be retained from year to year. It can include alphabetic and numeric characters. Do not use non-numeric or non-alphabetic characters. This item is the sole means of DfE computer identification of each child record. The system is currently set to strip out any leading zeros in child identifiers. We would therefore ask local authorities to not use leading zeros in child identifiers.

If you are planning to change child identifiers, eg as part of a new computer scheme, DfE must be advised at an early stage.

If a looked after child is adopted, and subsequently becomes looked after again at a later date, they should have two separate unlinked records – one for pre-adoption and one for post-adoption – with two different child identifiers.

2.1.2 Gender

Looked after children must be classified as being male or female.

Codeset for Gender of Child

1	Male.
2	Female.

2.1.3 Date of birth

The date of birth should be recorded in a DD/MM/YYYY format, ie day/month/year as a four digit number.

Examples:

Born 24 January 1999: enter as 24/01/1999.

Born 15 November 2004: enter as 15/11/2004.

If the exact day of birth is not known

Assume it was the 15th of the month. Do not use first day of the month as a dummy date of birth.

Unknown dates of birth can be a problem with unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC).

2.1.4 Ethnic origin code

Local authorities should, as a first step, ask the child which of the standard Ethnic Origin codes they feel best describes their origin. If this is not possible, the authority should code the child in accordance with its country of origin, coupled with their own observations;

The list of categories below reflects those used in the school census and the children in need (CiN) return.

This item should not be left blank; please note there is deliberately no code for origin not known. If the ethnic origin is unknown, local authorities are asked to make an intelligent guess based on local knowledge and their own observations at interviews with the children and/or parents in order to select the most appropriate code.

Codeset for ethnic origin

WBRI	White British
WIRI	White Irish
WOTH	Any other White background
WIRT	Traveller of Irish Heritage
WROM	Gypsy/Roma
MWBC	White and Black Caribbean
MWBA	White and Black African
MWAS	White and Asian
MOTH	Any other Mixed background
AIND	Indian
APKN	Pakistani
ABAN	Bangladeshi
AOTH	Any other Asian background
BCRB	Caribbean
BAFR	African
BOTH	Any other Black background

CHNE	Chinese
OOTH	Any other ethnic group
REFU	Refused
NOBT	Information not yet obtained

Coding the ethnic origin of some children receiving care will never be an exact science. Much depends on local practice, just as much depends on which ethnic grouping the child and/or its parents perceive themselves to be. The following table is offered as guidance to assist coders, particularly in respect of children who have recently arrived in this country, by endeavouring to link the ethnic codes with the child's country of origin.

It is important to remember that local authorities are at perfect liberty to devise their own sub divisions which more accurately reflect their local population, always providing these sub-divisions are converted to the standard codes on the statistical returns.

Country of origin	Code(s)	Other possible ethnic groups
Afghanistan	AOTH	
Albania	WOTH	
Algeria	BAFR	
Angola	BAFR	
Bangladesh	ABAN	
Bosnia	WOTH	
Cameroon	BAFR	
China	CHNE	
Columbia	MOTH or OOTH	Many ethnic groups and mixtures thereof possible. Recorders should use their discretion.
Cote D'Ivoire	BAFR	
Croatia	WOTH	
Czech Republic	WOTH	
Congo	BAFR	
Ecuador	MOTH or OOTH	Many ethnic groups and mixtures thereof possible. Recorders should use their discretion.

Country of origin	Code(s)	Other possible ethnic groups
Eritrea	BAFR	
Ethiopia	BAFR	
Ghana	BAFR	
India	AIND	
Iran	AOTH	
Iraq	AOTH	
Kenya	BAFR, AOTH, WOTH, or MOTH	Kenya also has relatively large Asian and European populations.
Lebanon	AOTH	
Lithuania	WOTH	
Nigeria	BAFR	
Pakistan	APKN	
Poland	WOTH	
Romania	WOTH	
Russia	WOTH	Many ethnic groups and mixtures thereof possible. Recorders should use their discretion.
Rwanda	BAFR	
Serbia	WOTH	
Sierra Leone	BAFR	
Somalia	BAFR	
Sri Lanka	AOTH/AIND	
Sudan	AOTH/BAFR	Sudan has a prominent Arab population.
Turkey	WOTH	Although Turkey is on the border between Europe and Asia, code WOTH should be used for all Turks.
Uganda	BAFR	
Ukraine	WOTH	
The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia	WOTH	

2.1.5 Unique pupil number (UPN)

Section 83 of the Children Act 1989 was amended by Section 54 of the Children Act 2004 and brought into force on 1 March 2005 by the Children Act 2004 (Commencement No 1) Order 2005 (C 18)-SI 2005/847. Therefore as of 1 March 2005, particulars required to be transmitted to the SoS (DFE) by virtue of Section 83 of the Children Act 1989 may include particulars relating to and identifying individual children.

English schools in the maintained sector have a statutory requirement to allocate UPNs to their pupils. They are usually allocated during a pupil's first entry into the maintained school sector. Local authorities have the responsibility for allocating and maintaining UPNs for pupils not educated in a maintained school. This data item is not required for children looked after under an agreed series of short term placements (V3 or V4 legal status). However we would expect to receive a UPN for all other children of compulsory school age – those aged 4 or over at 31 August 2016.

The UPN must be 13 characters long. The first character is a letter (but cannot be I, O or S). The remaining characters are numeric. For example H801200001001. If the UPN is temporary then the last character must be a letter. The UPN field cannot be left blank, unless the child is looked after under an agreed series of short term placements.

Each local authority has a number of people who can access the 'Key to Success' (KtS) website which can be used to search for UPNs of children who are placed outside your local authority. If you do not know who your contact for this website is, please contact the [data collection helpdesk](#).

For looked after children that have been adopted and subsequently return to being looked after, the UPN on the child's pre and post adoption records should be different.

If the UPN is unknown, then one of the codes below should be used. These codes are to be used within the UPN field where it is not possible to provide a UPN. They are not entered into a separate field as they are in the CIN Census.

If a child is educated outside England, please use UPN unknown code UN3, unless the child has a UPN from previously attending a school in England. If the child is home educated and has previously attended a mainstream school, please provide the UPN allocated earlier.

Codeset for unknown UPN

UN1	Child looked after is not of school age and has not yet been assigned a UPN.
UN2	Child looked after has never attended a maintained school in England (eg some UASC).
UN3	Child looked after is educated outside England.
UN4	Child is newly looked after (from one week before end of collection period) and the UPN was not yet known at the time of the SSDA903 annual statistical return.
UN5	Sources collating UPNs reflect discrepancy(ies) for the child's name and/or surname and/or date of birth therefore preventing reliable matching (eg duplicated UPN).

Advice to local authorities about UPNs:

1. To be advised that the UPN can be included in their children services systems and files for the purpose of being able to complete the SSDA903 return (and the children in need (CIN) Census) but the UPN must not be used in any operational sense for children's services activities within the local authority or for other purposes;
2. It is up to local authorities how they track down the UPN – if easier for them to store in their social services databases that is up to them but they must remember that under the guidance provided by the Information Commissioner, UPNs should not be used as a replacement for pupil identification systems already in place in non-educational departments;
3. It is the responsibility of local authorities to ensure that UPN information is correct. Data from the SSDA903 will be matched to school census and educational attainment data using the UPN as the primary matching key;
4. Legal advice to local authorities should come from their own local authority's legal department but local authorities may also seek advice direct from the Information Commissioner's Office if they so wish;
5. Further information about UPNs can be found on the [department's website](#).

2.1.6 Motherhood status

Local authorities are asked to indicate whether each looked after girl is, on 31 March, a mother.

Codeset for Motherhood Status

0	Female child is not a mother
1	Female child is a mother

The motherhood status should be entered for all girls, this includes those currently looked after and girls who have ceased to be looked after.

For girls who cease to be looked after during the year ending 31 March, local authorities are asked to indicate whether each looked after girl was a mother (1 = yes, 0 = no) at the time of being looked after. A girl who ceased to be looked after in the year ending 31 March 2017 should only be recorded as a mother if her child/children was/were born before she left care. The only exception to this is if the pregnancy did not result in a live birth or if the girl was looked after under an agreed series of short term placements.

Only data on live births is required (data on pregnancies that do not result in a live birth will not be collected). Live births exclude miscarriages and still births but include neo-natal deaths (which occur within 28 days of birth). A child should be classified as a mother even if they do not care for the child themselves (eg if consent was given for the child to be adopted).

2.1.7 Date of birth of mother's child

If the girl is a mother the date of birth of the first child is required. The date should be recorded in a DD/MM/YYYY format, ie day/month/year as a four digit number.

Examples:

Date 15 November 1994: enter as 15/11/1994.

Date 24 January 2013: enter as 24/01/2013.

(Manual amendments only may be made using DD/MM/YY, but will appear as DD/MM/YYYY).

This data item is not required for girls looked after under an agreed series of short term placements.

2.2 Episode information

2.2.1 Date episode commenced

This item records the date that each episode began. For the first episode in the year, this date can be in the current data year, or an earlier data year. When loading data using CSV or XML, dates must be recorded in a DD/MM/YYYY format ie day/month/year as a four digit number.

Example: 4 November 2016 should be entered as 04/11/2016.

Exceptionally, once loaded, the dates in the episode fields will appear as DD/MM/YY (year as a 2 digit number). Manual amendments to episode dates may be made using either format DD/MM/YY or DD/MM/YYYY, though the latter will appear as DD/MM/YY when saved). This is intended to make the episodes easier to read and manually amend, particularly when a record contains several episodes.

Where episodes are consecutive, the new episode must start on the same day that the previous episode finished.

When recording an agreement to provide a series of short term placements (legal status V3/V4), enter in this field the date the first placement under the agreement began. For further information about children being looked after under a series of short term placements see Section 1.9.

Where an episode began in a previous statistical year, but is still open at 31 March, do not complete 'Reason Episode Ceased' or 'Date Episode Ceased'. The following year's record must then start with the same episode details showing the actual date the episode commenced if the episode subsequently closes, both the 'Reason Episode Ceased' and the 'Date Episode Ceased' should be recorded).

Episodes cannot start and end on the same day. If a child has two changes of legal status in one day only the second legal status is recorded. Similarly, in the unlikely event of two placements starting on the same day, only the status at the end of the day should be recorded. In such cases we no longer regard the first move of the day as being a placement. It follows from this that an essential component of a placement for SSSDA903 purposes is that a placement must involve an overnight stay. A 'placement' that does not include an overnight stay should be regarded as a 'visit' and not shown on the SSSDA903.

2.2.2 Reason for new episode of care

This changed for the 2015 to 2016 collection.

Reason for new SSDA903 episode	Code
Started to be looked after	S
Change of legal status only	L
Change of placement (i.e. carer) only	P
Change of placement (but same carer) only	T
Change of both legal status and placement (i.e. carer) at same time	B
Change of legal status and change of placement (but same carer) at same time	U

Use Code **S** where a child is starting to be looked after for the first time, or had previously ceased to be looked after, and is now starting to be looked after again. Also use code S when recording agreements to provide short term placements (legal status V4), and for individual breaks under such an agreement, if these are being recorded separately (legal status V3).

Use Code **L** where there is a change of legal status but the placement does not change. By 'legal status' we mean the legal status underlying the fact that the child is looked after.

Use Code **P** where there is a change of placement (i.e. carer), but the legal status does not change. This would include the following scenarios:

- Move from one foster carer to another foster carer (e.g. U3 to U3 placement type code).
- Move from a foster carer to a children's home (e.g. U3 to K2 placement types).

In both of these scenarios there has been a change of carer. When a child is living independently, a new episode should be created each time they move and 'change of placement (i.e. carer) only' should be used.

Use Code **T** where there is a change of placement but the child remains with the same carer and the legal status does not change. This would include the following scenarios:

- Child moves house with current foster carer (either inside or outside of local authority boundary).
- Child remains with same carer or within same setting but either the URN of the setting changes or the provider type changes (e.g. a foster carer moves from an IFA to the local authority provider).

In both of these scenarios, the child has remained with the same carer, but for some other reason, a new placement is required on the SSDA903.

Use Code **B** where both legal status and placement change (i.e. change of carer) on the same day. The two changes do not need to be simultaneous or consequent one upon the other. The code simply reflects that there was a change in carer and a change in legal status, for whatever reason, on the same day.

Use Code **U** where both legal status and placement change on the same day, but the child remains with the same carer. The two changes do not need to be simultaneous or consequent one upon the other. The code simply reflects that there was a change in placement and a change in legal status, for whatever reason, on the same day.

2.2.3 Legal status

The legal status code on the SSDA903 records the legal status underlying being 'looked after'. If a child is looked after because it is accommodated, the legal status goes some way to describe (in legal terms at least) why the child is being looked after.

There are many legal statuses arising from the Children Act, or the Youth Justice System, to which a child can be subject but which have no bearing on whether a child is 'looked after' or not. These are not recorded on the SSDA903, and no legal status codes are provided for them.

The renewal of an existing legal status does not automatically generate a new episode. If the legal status code does not change, a new episode is not required (unless there happens to be a change of placement at the same time).

Example

If a child is already looked after under an interim care order, a renewal of the interim care order does not change the legal status and no new episode is required. However, if a child looked after under an interim care order becomes the subject of a full care order, then a new episode is required to record the start of the full care order.

In certain circumstances a child being looked after can have more than one 'looked after' legal status. In general this happens when a child who is already 'looked after' under a Children Act care order comes into contact with the Youth Justice System, and as a result is detained in local authority accommodation under a second legal status. Two legal statuses cannot be shown as current on SSDA903. In such cases the latest legal status should be recorded and the episode under the previous status should be closed.

Example

A child who is already subject to a care order is remanded to local authority accommodation under Section 23 (1) of CYPA 1969. The care order episode should be closed, and a new episode should start under the "remanded to local authority accommodation" legal status code. When the episode under the remand status ends, a further episode under the care order legal status will start, unless the care order has been discharged.

We have attempted to identify and provide a code for every legal status which theoretically could underpin a child being 'looked after'. If future changes in legislation lead to new 'looked after' legal statuses, we will provide new legal status codes. Our analysis of the use of the former legal status code 98 showed that in the vast majority of cases such children were either not looked after, or that another existing legal status was appropriate.

The 'wardship' legal status code was a possible legal status identified by some local authorities in the consultation exercise on the future of the SSDA903 codes for which we did not have an existing legal status. However, the use of this code was restricted to just a few exceptional cases where the High Court has exercised its residual power to make a child a ward of the High Court, and has directed that the child should be accommodated by a local authority. In practice such cases were found to be so extremely rare, it was felt that the use of a separate code could not be

warranted. If such a case should arise, it should be coded C2, as the practical effects are exactly the same.

Codeset for legal status

C1	Interim care order
C2	Full care order
D1	Freeing order granted
E1	Placement order granted
V2	Single period of accommodation under section 20
V3	Accommodated under an agreed series of short-term breaks, when individual episodes of care are recorded
V4	Accommodated under an agreed series of short-term breaks, when agreements are recorded (ie NOT individual episodes of care)
L1	Under police protection and in local authority accommodation
L2	Emergency protection order (EPO)
L3	Under child assessment order and in local authority accommodation
J1	Remanded to local authority accommodation or to youth detention accommodation
J2	Placed in local authority accommodation under PACE, including secure accommodation. However this would not necessarily be accommodation where the child would be detained.
J3	Sentenced to Youth Rehabilitation Order (Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 , as amended by LASPOA 2012, with residence or intensive fostering requirement)

Legal status codes: notes and definitions

Care orders

C1: Interim care order

Children Act 1989, Section 38

Lasts up to 28 days then has to be renewed. Renewal does not cause a new episode on the SSDA903, as legal status has not changed.

C2: Care order

Children Act 1989, Section 31 (1) (a)

Not time limited. If a care order and a freeing order were granted on the same day, code only the freeing order.

This code should also be used for:

- Deemed care order (where the child has been continuously in care since 14/10/1991) **CA 1989 Schedule 14 par. 15 (2)**;
- Care order extended by appeal court **CA 1989 s 40 (5)**;
- Care order pending appeal **CA 1989 s 40 (1) or (3)**;
- Care order transferred from Scotland, Northern Ireland, Channel Islands or Isle of Man **CYPA 1969 sections 25(1) and 26(2)**;
- Wardship granted in the High Court and the child placed in local authority accommodation (these cases are very rare).

Freed for adoption

D1: Freed for adoption

Adoption Act 1976, Section 18(5)

Freeing orders can no longer be applied for (since 30 December 2005). While the freeing order is in force, the child retains its looked after status.

There are still a high number of children subject to freeing orders on the SSDA903. We do not expect to see such numbers eleven years after the end of freeing orders. We have included stricter validation rules to make sure that these figures are not as a result of data quality issues. A validation error (451) will be produced for each child under the legal status of freeing order. The legal status of all children where this error occurs should be double checked with the Adoption Team Manager to confirm the legal status of the child. Local authorities are urged to review all children's cases within their authority to identify those children whose legal status is "freed for adoption" and ensure that their legal status is correct and reflects their care plan.

Placement order

E1: Placement order

Adoption and Children Act 2002, Section 21

A placement order is a court order which gives a local authority the legal authority to place a child for adoption with any prospective adopters who may be chosen by the authority. Only local authorities may apply for placement orders. The order continues in force until it is revoked, an adoption order is made in respect of the child, the child marries, forms a civil partnership or the child reaches 18. While the placement order is in force the child retains their looked after status. Any existing **Section 8 order under the Children Act 1989** - (a contact order, residence order, child

arrangements order, prohibited steps order or specific issue order) or a supervision order - ceases to have effect; under **Section 29(1) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002** the care order does not have effect at any time while the placement order is in force but will be reactivated if the placement order is revoked. If a care order and placement order are granted on the same day, record only the placement order on the SSDA903

A placement order might be sought during or after care proceedings or instead of applying for a care order. As durations for looked after children are calculated by calendar difference, the care order effectively had a duration of zero days, and therefore should **not** be recorded on the 903, only the placement order.

Voluntary accommodation

V2: Single period of accommodation under Section 20 of the Children Act

Use for all instances of 'voluntary accommodation' apart from the special cases covered by codes V3 and V4.

V3 and V4: Accommodated under an agreed series of short term breaks

Various different terms are used to refer to this group of children, including 'short breaks', 'family link placements', 'shared care' and 'respite care'. A full description of the group of children who should be coded under either of these two codes is given in Section 1.9

The breaks must form part of a regular programme of support agreed between Social Services and the child's parents or guardians. The breaks must include at least one night away from home, but cannot exceed 17 days continuous care (**Arrangement for Placement of Children (General) Regulations, 1991, Reg. 13**). Up to 75 days of accommodation away from home may take place under a single agreement in any twelve-month period. Strict validation rules will be placed wherever possible to ensure these rules on duration are not breached (**DH Local Authority Circular LAC (95) 14**).

To note these timings changed in 2011-12, previously these placements could not exceed 28 days continuous care and 120 days during any 12 month period.

Local authorities must consistently record all children looked after under a series of short term breaks with either legal status V3 or legal status V4. These codes are not interchangeable (see Section 1.9).

Most short term placements under an agreement will be self-contained events. In the normal course of events, use "reason for new episode" code S and "reason episode ceased" code E8 to begin and end either an individual episode or an agreement.

However if a child, whilst actually in receipt of respite care, became subject to another legal status, such as a care order or a youth justice code, the “reason episode ceased” should be X1.

V3: Accommodated under an agreed series of short term breaks, when recording each and every placement as a separate episode

Use code V3 when recording each and every break as a separate episode (see section 1.9 for further details of this option). For SSDA903 purposes, take into account any short break that involves at least one night away from home, even if it does not last 24 hours.

V4: Accommodated under an agreed series of short-term breaks, when recording agreements

Use code V4 when recording an agreement for a series of short term breaks as a single episode (see Section 1.9 for further information). The date episode started should be the start date of the first placement under the agreement, and the date episode ceased should be the end of the last placement.

Detained in local authority accommodation on child protection grounds

L1: Child under police protection in local authority accommodation
Children Act 1989 section 46 (1)

Used where the police have taken a child into protection in the course of their duties. This power is time-limited to 72 hours. The child is only looked after if he/she is taken into local authority accommodation; if the period in accommodation is less than an overnight stay, do not record.

L2: Emergency protection order
Children Act 1989 Sections 44 and 45

A court order granted on application of a local authority or the NSPCC, duration is initially limited to eight days, with a possible extension of seven days, plus non-work days.

Where a child under an EPO is in hospital, treat the child as looked after if the local authority is the applicant or the order has been transferred to the local authority.

L3: Under child assessment order and in authority accommodation
Children Act 1989 Section 43

A court order which allows a local authority to make an assessment of a child's state of health or welfare. The child is only looked after if he/she is taken into local authority accommodation for the purpose of carrying out the assessment.

Youth justice legal statuses

J1: Remanded to local authority accommodation or to youth detention accommodation

From 3 December 2012, when the relevant sections of the LASPOA came into effect, any child remanded by the youth court in criminal proceedings will be looked after, whether the child is remanded to local authority accommodation or to youth detention accommodation.

Prior to the commencement of the LASPOA children could be remanded under two separate pieces of legislation. These were:

A : Remanded to the local authority which has the responsibility to accommodate

CYPA 1969 s 23 (1) as inserted by CJA 1991 s 60 and CA 1989 s 21 (2);

B : Court ordered secure remand and held in authority accommodation

Crime and Disorder Act 1998 s.97.

Group A refers to young persons who are remanded to the care of a local authority, where release on bail has not been granted. In these cases, the local authority arranges the accommodation, which can include the young person being placed with own parents.

Group B refers to young persons who were the subject of a Court Ordered Secure Remand (COSR). These children are looked after if they are placed in local authority accommodation, including secure accommodation.

Do not use this code for remands on bail where the local authority accommodates (this is Section 20, use code V2).

J2: Placed in local authority accommodation under PACE

Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, section 38(6); and CA 1989 s 21 (2)

This legal code refers to children who are helping the police with their enquiries; the police have a duty to either charge or release the child as soon as possible. During this period, children may become accommodated, as no child should spend a night in police cells. If the period in local authority accommodation is less than an overnight stay, do not record.

J3: Sentenced to youth rehabilitation order (Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008, as amended by LASPOA 2012) with residence or intensive fostering requirement

Use where a young person as a condition of a Youth Rehabilitation Order imposed by the youth court is required to live in local authority accommodation. If there is no 'residence requirement' to live in local authority accommodation, the child is not 'looked after', and should not be shown on the SSDA903. Note that a supervision order made under **Section 31 or 35 of the Children Act** is not a 'looked after' status.

- **Differences between a child who is looked after under Section 20 of the Children Act and a child who is on a care order**

A child who is looked after under a care order remains looked after until the care order is discharged by a court, whereas a child who is only looked after because the local authority is accommodating them under **S20 of the Children Act** ceases to be looked after once they cease to be accommodated. However, even for an accommodated child, the local authority may well have continuing responsibilities to the child as a child in need under Section 17 of the Act - they should assess needs and provide services accordingly.

With reference to the **Mental Health Act 1983**, it was also added that "under **Section 116**, local authorities are obliged to arrange for visits to children who are admitted to hospital (whether under section or informally) whilst subject to a care order and to take any other steps that might be expected of the child's parents. Under **Section 117**, the relevant local authority must join with the health authority in providing after-care services to anyone who had been sectioned. This is to continue until the authorities are satisfied that the services are no longer needed."

2.2.4 Category of need code

Category of need (CIN) codes record the main reason why a child is being provided with services. This provides a further insight as to why a particular child is being looked after. There are eight broad CIN codes designed to describe the different sorts of pressure upon Social Services to provide services and hence to commit resources. They help provide answers as to why social service departments of local authority need to be involved with children and their families.

Use the 'need code' most relevant at the time the current period of being looked after began. The same code should continue to be recorded on the SSDA903 so long as the period of being looked after continues, even if this lasts for a number of years.

Note that this code does not relate to the old “reason for being looked after” codes which changed from episode to episode to record the current specific reason for being looked after. The category of need code relates to the reason the child originally became looked after and should remain the same throughout their period of care.

If there is difficulty choosing between two or more categories of need, choose the category that comes highest up in the table, eg if trying to decide between ‘Family in acute stress’ and ‘Family dysfunction’, choose ‘Family in acute stress’. For further explanation of the definitions, please refer to [Appendix A of the children in need guide](#).

Codeset for category of need

N1	Abuse or neglect	Children in need as a result of, or at risk of, abuse or neglect
N2	Child’s disability	Children and their families whose main need for services arises out of the child’s disabilities, illness or intrinsic condition
N3	Parental illness or disability	Children whose main need for services arises because the capacity of their parents or carers to care for them is impaired by disability, illness, mental illness, or addictions
N4	Family in acute stress	Children whose needs arise from living in a family going through a temporary crisis such that parenting capacity is diminished and some of the children’s needs are not being adequately met
N5	Family dysfunction	Children whose needs arise mainly out of their living with families where the parenting capacity is chronically inadequate
N6	Socially unacceptable behaviour	Children and families whose need for services arises primarily out of their children’s behaviour impacting detrimentally on the community
N7	Low income	Children, either living in families or independently, whose need for services arises mainly from being dependent on an income below the standard state entitlements
N8	Absent parenting	Children whose need for services arises mainly from having no parents available to provide for them. Children whose parents decide it is in the best interest for the child to be adopted would be included in this category

2.2.5 Home postcode

The postcode of the address where the child was living when they became looked after. If the child becomes looked after while in hospital after being born, use the mother’s home address.

If a child leaves and re-enters care, then the postcode of the address where the child was living when they entered care for a second or subsequent time should be recorded, rather than the postcode of the address they were living at when they became looked after for the first time.

This should be returned for all placements during the latest year. Please see section 2.2.6 for further details on the groups of children for whom this data item is not required, and additional fields that will be derived from the postcode fields.

2.2.6 Placement postcode

The postcode of the location where the child is placed. This should be returned from all placements during the latest year. Please see below for further details on the groups of children for whom this data item is not required, and additional fields that will be derived from the postcode fields.

Home and placement postcodes – further notes and definitions

Home and placement postcodes should be recorded for all placements during the latest year. However there will be one exception to this:

- Children looked after under an agreed series of short term placements (legal status of V3 or V4).

However, if a child changes to another legal status during the year (ie no longer an agreed series of short term placements) then the postcodes should be entered for the new placement.

If the child is in a temporary placement use the postcode of the usual placement for the child, this should be the postcode of the placement that the child returns to following the temporary placement. If a child moves to a new placement after the temporary placements then a placement move should be recorded in the usual way. The same should be applied for children who are missing from their placement.

For unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC), the home postcode is not required but the placement postcode should be available. In this case, the placement postcode should be returned which will enable the derivation of 'local authority of placement' and 'placement location' fields (see below for further detail on these derived fields) but the home postcode should be left blank. Similarly, in other specific circumstances where a home postcode is not available, e.g. overseas children, the parents are homeless or a child from a traveller family, then the home postcode should be left blank.

The home and placement postcodes are then used to derive the following further data items for each placement:

Distance between home and placement (miles)	The distance (in miles) between the child's home postcode and the child's placement postcode	This field should give the calculated distance. However local authorities are able to overwrite this manually where necessary.
Local authority of placement	The local authority (calculated from the placement postcode) where the child is placed	This field should give the calculated local authority number, or if the placement postcode is not in England, it will try and establish where the child has been placed according to the codes below. However local authorities are able to overwrite this manually where necessary. They should also overwrite this where the child is in a confidential placement. The codeset is: NIR - Child placed in Northern Ireland WAL - Child placed in Wales SCO - Child placed in Scotland NUK - Child placed outside the UK CON - Child placed in confidential placement
Placement location	This will calculate whether the child is being looked after inside or outside the local boundary responsible for the child's care.	IN – inside local authority boundary OUT – outside local authority boundary

Distance between home and placement (miles) - (derived from postcodes)

In order to calculate the distance between home and placement local authorities must include the home and placement postcodes in the episodes CSV files or in the main body of the XML file. The CLA collection system in the 2016 to 2017 collection year incorporates the distance measuring tool previously used in the "In Your Area" website.

There is a possibility that the postcode in question is a recent one and has not yet been included in our system, in this case the local authority should find the closest valid postcode.

When a child's home postcode is outside of England or not available, or the placement postcode is not available, please use 999.9 for the distance. This includes children from overseas, children whose parents were homeless or children who had no fixed address as they belonged to a traveller family.

If you believe that the distance has been miscalculated, please manually enter the correct distance. If you believe that the postcode is incorrect please amend the record and re-load data for that child.

Local authority of placement - (derived from postcodes)

The local authority where the looked after child is placed will be derived from the postcode of the placement address. The CLA system will accept a valid postcode and will derive the local authority of placement from the placement postcode if the child is looked after in England. If the submitted postcode is not in England, the CLA system will try and find out if it is in the United Kingdom and derive the country accordingly using one of the codes in the table below. If the postcode is not in the UK then the CLA system will display the default code of NUK used for children placed outside the UK.

If the placement information is not available because a child is living at a 'confidential' address, the value should be overwritten manually using the code "CON". There are only a limited number of circumstances where this should be used; we would usually expect the local authority of placement to be completed for children who are placed for adoption.

If the child is placed with parents who have moved house since the child became looked after, the placement address should be the current placement address and the home address should be the address of the child when they first became looked after, we will then see from episode information that the child is placed with parents. Some local authorities have expressed concern regarding these types of placements therefore we are continuing to collect this information to monitor the effect they may cause.

If you believe that the local authority of placement has been miscalculated, please manually enter the correct local authority code. If you believe that the postcode is incorrect please amend the record and re-load data for that child.

Codeset for children looked after placed outside England or in confidential placement

NIR	Children placed in Northern Ireland
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WAL	Children placed in Wales
SCO	Children placed in Scotland
NUK	Children placed outside the UK
CON	Child placed in confidential placement

Placement location - (derived from postcodes)

For each of the placements in section 2.2.8, (except those children looked after who have a legal status of V3 or V4), a placement location code will be derived using the local authority of placement field derived from placement postcode. This will show whether the child is being looked after inside or outside the local boundary responsible for the child's care. Even where the child's local authority of placement is confidential (code 'CON'), the placement location should still be provided and should be automatically derived from the postcode.

The code OUT should be used for placements outside of the UK.

Codeset for placement location

IN	Inside local authority boundary
OUT	Outside local authority boundary

2.2.7 Placement unique reference number (URN)

Introduced in the collection year 2015 to 2016, there is a requirement to enter the unique reference number (URN) where the setting is subject to Ofsted inspections. For children's homes, for example, this would be the URN of the individual home, and for foster or adoptive placements, for example, this would be the URN of the relevant service or agency providing the placement. For larger providers with multiple settings or branches this would mean that the precise URN for the particular setting or branch will be required. It will be required for any placement that is ongoing on 1 April 2016, or for any new placement.

The data, which will cover roughly 90% of all placements, will then be used to map placement use in a more accurate way than has been available before, to enable better understanding of placement patterns, and to help improve understanding of why children are placed in certain placements and how this can impact on them. It will also give us a better understanding of the market for children's homes and the use of independent fostering and adoption providers so that government can consider appropriate policy responses to help the sufficiency of the market. It is also anticipated that local authorities themselves will find the additional data helpful, for instance by linking Ofsted quality ratings to provision.

Ofsted will provide local authorities with complete lists of URNs for inspected providers which are open at any point during the collection year. Currently this is supplied on a monthly basis to named individuals, of whom there can be up to five per authority. Local authorities nominate these individuals by contacting enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk and recipients will require a secure email address [.gsi; .gsx; .gcsx; or .cjsm.net]. Ofsted will support local authorities in providing this information throughout the year and when preparing their SSDA903 returns.

The URN is in the format SC999999, 999999 for Secure Training Centres or 9999999 for newly registered providers. It is our intention that, when submitting the SSDA903 return data, validation will be introduced to check the combined validity of the URN and placement details against details of the provider. Where placements are of a type or in a setting not covered by Ofsted URNs, such as placed with parents, or in a Youth Offender Institute (YOI), then no URN will be expected.

Currently the URN is required in addition to the other information asked of each placement, but we expect that in future years the information requirements may be streamlined for certain placements once this new data item is established.

2.2.8 Placement type

This category can be defined, in a broad sense, as indicating where the child is living. Data items giving information on the provision of placements and the location where the child is being looked after are collected in conjunction with the placement for each child. Please see paragraph 2.2.9 on Placement Provider and paragraph 2.2.6 on Placement Location in this guide for further details.

Some care is required when coding placement types, as there can be instances where a child remains living at the same location, but the placement code changes and a new episode is required. There are also a few cases where a change of placement should not be recorded on the SSDA903, and those where the local authority has the option of whether to record them or not.

A change of placement can happen either when a child:

- Moves to a new placement, even if this does not require using a different placement code (this is the most frequent kind of placement change); or
- If the child remains at the same location, but the placement code changes for any other reason (eg child becomes 'placed for adoption' with foster parents).

In both instances the fact that it is a change of placement is indicated by the use of 'Reason for New Episode' codes **P B, T** or **U**.

Examples

- A child in a foster placement moving from one foster carer to another will require a new episode (although in many cases the placement code in the new episode will be the same).
- A child moving from a foster placement to a community home will require a new episode and a new placement code.
- A child in a foster placement who is placed for adoption with the same foster carer will require a new episode and a new placement code (although the child is living in the same place).

All changes of placement, however short their duration, must be recorded for SSDA903 purposes, unless they are specifically excluded under the following sections:

When care of a child is regularly shared between two settings

Continuous care of a child may be shared between two settings on a regular basis, eg at a special school and at a foster home. Where the pattern of sharing is on a stable and planned basis, eg 3 nights in one setting and 4 nights in another, or term time in one setting and vacations in another, it should be recorded as a single continuous episode and coded according to the placement at which the child spends most time. The separate moves from one placement to another should not be included on the SSDA903.

When a foster carer moves house

When a foster carer moves house, either to remain within the same local authority boundary or to move across a local authority boundary, then a placement change should be recorded and a new placement postcode should be entered. In this case, code T should be used for the reason for new episode as the child has remained with the same carer.

Option to record temporary placements

Local authorities have the option of recording temporary placement moves on the SSDA903, if they so wish. If local authorities elect to record these temporary placements, a series of five special placement codes (T0 and T1 to T4) have been designed specifically for that purpose. Local authorities are required to use either T0, for recording all four types of temporary move, or codes T1 to T4, which individually describe the different kinds of move. It is however important that your local authority

consistently uses either T0 or T1 to T4 for all temporary moves and that if temporary codes are recorded they are recorded for all children.

Use of these codes will ensure that whilst these moves in and out of temporary placements are recorded on the SSDA903, they can nevertheless be separately identified and thereby excluded from local authority indicator calculations. The main advantage to local authorities in using these codes is that the SSDA903 will then contain a more precise record of where the child is placed at any given point in time. There will also be further advantages in allowing local authorities to calculate the number of care days provided in these special cases, and payments due to carers. If local authorities do not wish to record these temporary placements, they should simply be ignored, and the main place of residence treated as a single on-going placement.

Temporary codes can only be used when it is intended that the child will return to the original placement and this intention is fulfilled. If the intention is not fulfilled the 'temporary' placement must be recorded like any other placement change and a 'T' code cannot be used.

Our validation rules will not allow a temporary code to be followed immediately by another temporary code. To be a temporary episode the child must return to the original placement. In the very rare circumstance where a child's holiday is immediately followed by a foster carer's holiday, to prevent the record failing the validation checks the child must artificially return to the original placement between the T2 and T3 episodes. While we do not like falsifying histories, as temporary episodes are excluded from any analysis it will not have an impact.

Joint funding arrangements

If the accommodation has been arranged by the local authority, and there is social services department involvement in planning and expenditure on the placement, then for SSDA903 purposes the child will normally be regarded as 'looked after'.

Planned periods at home when child is accommodated under Section 20

Unlike the situation when a child is under a care order (when the Placement with Parents Regulations would govern trial periods of being placed at home), it could be said that when a child accommodated under S20 is on a trial home break the 'period of care' is broken. In such circumstances, if the home break lasts seven days or less, is a planned, intentional break, and the child returns as planned to the original placement, the break should be ignored and the accommodation under Section 20 treated as a single on-going placement.

Periods of eight days or more duration should be treated as periods out of care when the child is not looked after, and have to be shown as breaks in the period of care on the SSDA903.

Missing children and unauthorised absences

If a child goes missing or is away from placement without authorisation, he/she should continue to be recorded as being at the placement he/she was at immediately prior to the missing incident. If he/she changes placement following the missing episode then a new episode and placement type should be recorded for that child in the usual way.

If a child starts to be looked after when missing, record the placement arranged for the child had he/she not been missing, then add details of the missing child to the missing module.

Children who are looked after under a care order and go missing or are away from placement without authorisation should continue to be recorded as being looked after at their previous placement until their 18th birthday or until the care order is rescinded by a court. Children who go missing or are away from placement without authorisation whilst being accommodated by local authorities under Section 20, should also continue to be recorded as being looked after until either:

- their 18th birthday; or
- the child resumes contact with the local authority or his/her whereabouts are established.

In either of these circumstances, the authority must decide as an outcome of a formal review and decision making process that the child is no longer being looked after. A child, even when aged 16 or over, cannot unilaterally end a period of Section 20 accommodation by simply walking away. The appropriate Reason Episode Ceased code for these cases is E8.

Placements with friends or relatives

If a foster placement commences as an immediate and emergency placement with a friend or relative under Regulation 11, and the carer goes on to become an approved foster carer looking after the same child, the placement should continue with the same code and a new episode should not be recorded.

Codeset for placement type

A3	Placed for adoption with parental/guardian consent with current foster carer (under Section 19 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002) or with a freeing order where parental/guardian consent has been given under Section 18(1)(a) of the Adoption Act 1976
A4	Placed for adoption with parental/guardian consent not with current foster carer (under Section 19 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002) or with a freeing order where parental/guardian consent has been given under Section 18(1)(a) of the Adoption Act 1976
A5	Placed for adoption with placement order with current foster carer (under Section 21 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002) or with a freeing order where parental/guardian consent was dispensed with under Section 18(1)(b) of the Adoption Act 1976
A6	Placed for adoption with placement order not with current foster carer (under Section 21 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002) or with a freeing order where parental/guardian consent was dispensed with under Section 18(1)(b) of the Adoption Act 1976
H5	Residential accommodation not subject to Children's Homes Regulations
K1	Secure Unit
K2	Children's Homes
P1	Placed with own parents or other person with parental responsibility
P2	Independent living eg in flat, lodgings, bedsit, B&B or with friends, with or without formal support
P3	Residential employment
R1	Residential Care Home
R2	NHS/Health Trust or other establishment providing medical or nursing care
R3	Family Centre or Mother and Baby Unit
R5	Young Offender Institution or prison
S1	All Residential schools, except where dual-registered as a school and Children's Home.
T0	<i>All types</i> of temporary move (see paragraph above for further details)
T1	Temporary periods in hospital

T2	Temporary absences of the child on holiday
T3	Temporary accommodation whilst normal foster carer is on holiday
T4	Temporary accommodation of seven days or less, <i>for any reason</i> , not covered by codes T1 to T3
U1	Foster placement with relative or friend- long term fostering
U2	Fostering placement with relative or friend who is also an approved adopter – FFA/concurrent planning
U3	Fostering placement with relative or friend who is not long-term or FFA/concurrent planning
U4	Foster placement with other foster carer- long term fostering
U5	Foster placement with other foster carer who is also an approved adopter – FFA/concurrent planning
U6	Foster placement with other foster carer- not long term or FFA/concurrent planning
Z1	Other placements (must be listed on a schedule sent to DfE with annual submission)

Placement codes: notes and definitions

A3 to A6: Placement for adoption (supersedes A1 and A2) *Adoption and Children Act 2002 - Section 18*

Placed for adoption means the child goes to live with the prospective adopters who will adopt them. It does not mean that the child has been adopted. It is a placement, not a legal status.

Placement of a child for adoption may only occur if the local authority has decided that the child should be placed for adoption.

A child may be *placed for adoption*:

- with the formal consent of the child's parents/guardian (Section 19 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002); or
- with a placement order from a court (Section 21 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002).

A child may be *placed for adoption* with their current foster carer or with a stranger or relative who is an approved adopter.

For SSDA903 purposes, the date to be recorded as the start of the placement for adoption should be derived as follows:

- The formal “placed for adoption” date agreed between the local authority and prospective adopters in the Adoption Placement Plan (regulation 35(2) and (5) of the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005). This applies whether the prospective adopter is the child’s foster carer or a stranger or relative to the child.
- Where a child’s existing foster carer applies direct to the court without the local authority placing the child for adoption with them, the date the adoption application is lodged with the court.

A3: Placed for adoption with consent with current foster carer (under *Section 19 of the Adoption and Children Act, 2002*)

When a child’s placement with the current foster carer becomes a placement for adoption with parental consent (***Section 19 of the 2002 Act***) the local authority should use code A3 and record the date that the child’s placement became a placement for adoption.

A4: Placed for adoption with consent not with current foster carer (under *Section 19 of the Adoption and Children Act, 2002*)

When a child is placed for adoption with prospective adopters who are not his or her current foster carers with parental consent (***Section 19 of the 2002 Act***), the local authority should use code A4 and report the date that the local authority placed the child for adoption with his or her prospective adopters.

A5: Placed for adoption with placement order with current foster carer (under *Section 21 of the Adoption and Children Act, 2002*)

When a local authority has the authority of a placement order to place a child for adoption with the current foster carer (***Section 21 of the 2002 Act***), the local authority should use code A5 and record the date the child’s placement became a placement for adoption. This will be included in the notification letter to the foster carer (***Regulation 35(5) of the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005***).

A6: Placed for adoption with placement order not with current foster carer (under *Section 21 of the Adoption and Children Act, 2002*)

When a local authority has the authority of a placement order to place a child for adoption with prospective adopters who are not his or her current foster carers (***Section 21 of the 2002 Act***), the local authority should use code A6 and report the

date that the local authority placed the child for adoption with his or her prospective adopters.

H5: Hostels and other supportive residential settings not subject to the children's homes regulations

Use for residential accommodation not subject to the **Children's Homes Regulations**, but where some supervisory or advice staff are employed (although they do not have to live on the premises). This placement code includes hostels, foyers, YMCAs. Also includes lodgings, flats and bedsits where supervisory staff or advice workers are specifically employed and available to provide advice and support to the residents. These support staff do not have to live on the premises, but must be an integral part of a formal support service provided by the place of residence. Placements in category H5 are therefore distinguished from those in P2 (independent living where no formal support structure is provided as part of the accommodation).

K1: Placed in secure accommodation

Use for all instances of placement in secure accommodation, either where **Section 25 of the Children Act** applies (or would apply after 72 hours), or where the child is subject to a court ordered secure remand.

A [list of secure accommodation](#) can be found in Table 2: Places Approved and Available, and Children Accommodated at 31 March 2015 by Individual Secure Children's Homes (numbers and percentages)"

Do not use code K1 for:

- Detention and Training Orders under s73 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998; or
- Detention under s53 of the CYPA 1933.

Note that while both of these are not recorded on the SSDA903, they are counted on SA1 (secure units statistical return).

K2: Placed in homes

Children's Homes are very diverse; use for all children's homes which fall within the meaning of **Section 1 of the Care Standards Act 2000** and the **Children's Homes Regulations 2001 (as amended 2011)** (except where the child is placed in a Secure Children's Home where K1 should be used). This code should be used for children placed in schools that are dual-registered as Children's Homes, as defined in **Section 1 (6) of the Care Standards Act 2000**.

P1: Placed With own parents or other person with parental responsibility

Use for any placement with a child's own parents, or other person with parental responsibility (as defined in the *Children Act*). This placement code is not limited to children under care orders. However, short planned home breaks for children accommodated under Section 20 should be coded in line with our instructions, and regarded for SSDA903 purposes, as periods out of care if they last eight days or more.

P2: Independent living, eg in flat, lodgings, bedsit, B&B or with friends, with or without formal support

Use where the young person is living independently. Visiting support may be included as part of the package.

P3: Residential employment

Use for apprenticeships and employment training where there is a clear employment component, and accommodation is provided.

U1 to U6: Foster placements

Foster placement with relative or friend (U1-U3) includes both immediate and emergency placements under *Regulations 11 and 38*, and placement with an approved foster carer who is a relative or friend. Where a placement starts as a '*Reg. 11 or 38*' placement and the carer then becomes an approved foster carer, do not start a new episode but retain the same code if the child continues to be placed with that carer. Please see notes below under U4-U6 for further information on when code U2 should be used.

Foster placement with other carer (U4-U6) should be used where the placement is not with a relative or friend, but instead with another foster carer.

U2 and U5 should be used in the circumstances described in the following paragraphs.

Fostering for Adoption/concurrent planning - a looked after child placed in a foster placement with carers who are foster carers and also approved prospective adopters who, in certain circumstances, may go on to adopt the child. The carers could be family/friends or strangers. FFA/concurrent planning is not to be confused with placing a child for adoption and codes A3-A6 must not be used in respect of FFA/concurrent planning cases. A3-A6 should only be used when the local authority has a placement order or parental consent to place a child for adoption.

In **concurrent planning** cases the effort is to rehabilitate the parents so that the child may return home. If that fails, and the local authority has a placement order or parental consent to place the child for adoption, the child is formally placed for adoption with the same carers who go on to adopt the child. At this stage the child's legal status changes to "placed for adoption".

In **Fostering for Adoption** cases, adoption is the likely outcome: the local authority are considering adoption for the child or are satisfied that the child ought to be placed for adoption but do not have a placement order or parental consent to place the child for adoption, but are seeking to obtain the order or consent. In these circumstances the child is placed in a foster placement with family/friends or strangers until a placement order or parental consent is obtained to place the child for adoption. Once the placement order/parental consent has been obtained the child's legal status changes to "placed for adoption" and the child is formally placed for adoption with the same carers who then go on to adopt the child.

See section 22C(9A)-(9C) of the Children Act 1989 (inserted by section 2 of the Children and Families Act 2014).

Long term foster care:

The definition of a long-term foster placement came into effect from 1 April 2015 in [The Care Planning and Fostering \(Miscellaneous Amendments\) \(England\) Regulations 2015](#). A "long term foster placement" means an arrangement made by the responsible authority for the child to be placed with a foster carer where:

- (a) the child's plan for permanence is foster care,
- (b) the foster carer has agreed to act as child's foster parent until the child ceases to be looked after, and
- (c) the responsible authority has confirmed the nature of the arrangement to the foster carer, parents and the child

Any reference to the responsible authority placing the child in a long term foster care arrangement includes a situation where a child is already placed with the foster carer and this placement becomes the long term foster placement.

Further information about the placement of children in a long-term foster care arrangement can be found in the [statutory guidance](#) for local authorities about Care Planning, Placement and Case Review.

R1: Residential care homes
Registered Homes Act 1984

Applies to Residential Care Homes and Nursing Homes that fall within the scope of the ***Care Standards Act 2000*** and the ***Children's Homes Regulations 2001 (as amended 2011)***. The services they provide will normally include an element of personal care or nursing care. 'Personal care' in this instance generally means help with personal activities such as feeding, washing, etc. This category does not include hospitals, or facilities provided by NHS/Health Trusts.

R2: NHS/Health Trust or other establishment providing medical/nursing care

Use for hospitals of all kinds when the child is placed there as part of the Care Plan. (temporary spells in hospital receiving treatment for injuries or illness does not fall in this category and are not normally recorded on the SSDA903). Also use for other facilities provided by Health Trusts.

R3: Residential family centre or mother and baby unit

Use for placement in a residential family centre, as defined in ***Section 4 (2) of the Care Standards Act 2000***, or a placement in a residential facility for mothers and babies (except hospitals and other NHS facilities). This placement type should also be used if a child is placed with their mother in a Women's Refuge.

R5: Young offender institute or prison

Use for looked after young people who are accommodated in one of these settings. These will generally be children (either on remand or serving a sentence) who have a concurrent care order.

S1: School

Use for any placement in a residential school, except schools that are dual-registered as children's homes, as defined in ***Section 1(6) of the Care Standards Act 2000***.

T0 and T1 to T4: Temporary placements

The use of these codes is discretionary. Local authorities have the option of either:

- recording on the SSDA903 temporary placements; or
- ignoring them, and treating the main placement as a single on-going placement.

If local authorities elect to record temporary placements, then these must be recorded for **all** children. When recording them local authorities have an option of codes they may use. They can either:

- use code T0 for all temporary moves; or
- use codes T1 to T4 which describes the different types of temporary move which are discounted for local authority indicator purposes.

T0: All temporary placements

Use this code for all types of temporary placements.

T1: Temporary periods in hospital

Use this code for periods of hospitalisation for treatment of injury or acute illness. These placements can last up to 42 days. Note that periods in hospital for the treatment of chronic conditions, where the placement in a medical environment is primarily to provide specialist care, should be coded R2.

T2: Temporary absences of the child on holiday

Use for when the child goes away temporarily, with or without his/her carers, for recreational purposes. This code covers the same kinds of break in the same kinds of holiday setting that a non-looked after child might receive, including activities such as school trips and summer camps. There is no time limit for such holidays.

T3: Temporary accommodation whilst normal foster carer is on holiday

Use for a temporary planned stay with a substitute carer when the child's regular foster carer is away from home on a holiday, or is having a break from caring for the child. The child may move to stay with a different foster carer or to a Residential Unit, or may be cared for by a substitute foster carer coming into the home of the child's regular carer.

Note that only two breaks of up to 21 days can be recorded in this way in any 12 month period. Third or subsequent holidays of the carer of less than 8 days duration should be coded T4. Third or subsequent holidays of the carer of more than 8 days duration cannot be recorded as a temporary placement.

We expect local authorities to make every effort to reduce the instability caused due to a foster carer going on holiday. In the very rare circumstance that the care of a child is shared between two foster carers, and this was the intention, this can be treated as one T3 episode. However, if it was not planned that the care of the child would be shared, then both placements must be recorded.

T4: Temporary accommodation for seven days or less (for any reason)

Use for stays away from the established placement, not covered by codes T1 to T3, of seven consecutive days or less for any reason, providing always there is a clear expectation at the outset that the child will be returning to his/her established placement.

To qualify for this code, the temporary placement must meet the following criteria:

- it must be planned, in the sense that the break is caused by, or designed to meet, a specific contingency; and
- there must be a clear expectation, before the move takes place, that the child will be returning to his/her original placement. If there is no such expectation, or if the child does not return (regardless of the intention) within eight days, the break does not qualify as being a temporary placement.

Virtually any reasonable reason for the break away from the normal place of residence can qualify as a specific contingency for the purposes of T4. Examples include:

- trial home leave;
- brief stays with relative to maintain contact with the child;
- normal place of residence temporarily unfit due to fire or structural damage;
- third, or subsequent holidays of the normal foster carer;
- half term holidays from residential schools spent at home with parents or guardian.

Z1: Other placement (not listed above)

Use this code exceptionally, where the placement does not reasonably fit any of the other categories provided above. It does not mean 'information not known' or 'not available'. This would include a young person who went to stay with a family member, that was not part of a planned placement move. If the family member then becomes an approved foster carer then this will change to a placement with a foster care who is a friend or family member (codes U1 to U3).

How do I treat planned temporary placements of more than seven days?

If the temporary placement of more than seven days meets any of the requirements set out below it can be ignored or recorded on the SSSDA903 return using the

placement codes T0 or T1-T3 (T4 can only be used for temporary placements lasting less than seven days). In all other cases it should be recorded:

- Temporary periods in hospital;
- Temporary absences of the child on holiday;
- Foster carer’s holiday (but breaks of longer than 21 days because their foster carer is on holiday, should be recorded on the SSDA903).

If more than two such breaks of between 8 and 21 days inclusive start during the year ending 31 March the third and subsequent breaks should be recorded.

However, where the temporary placement is at home it is necessary to consider the legal status of the child. As a general rule, if a child is under a care order, that order remains in force until either it is rescinded by a court, or the child reaches its 18th birthday. It follows therefore that these children continue to be looked after even whilst on a temporary placement at home, and any temporary stay of more than seven days must be shown. The appropriate placement code is P1, ‘Placed with own Parents’.

In contrast, if a child is being accommodated under **Section 20 of the Children Act**, a period at home of more than seven days (whether school holiday, “trial leave” or “home leave”) will break the period of care. In these cases, the child should be recorded as having ceased to be looked after on his or her return home; and when the child returns to its established placement, it needs to be recorded as having, once again, started to be looked after. The following table illustrates these options:

Children in a temporary placement of more than seven days

		Placement of child	
		At home	Elsewhere
Legal status of child	Care order	Placed with parents (P1)	Relevant placement code
	Section 20	Not looked after	Relevant placement code

If a looked after child is living with its mother, who is in a rehabilitation facility for substance users, what is the child’s placement code?

The nature and purpose of the placement is a social work practice decision, which will be reflected in the child’s care plan. The statistics should simply reflect whatever decision has been made. We are aware both of children being regarded as placed in the rehabilitation facility, and of children being regarded as placed with their own parent, depending on circumstances. The placement code for a rehabilitation facility

would be Z1 unless it was a registered care home (code R1) or an NHS Health Trust establishment such as a Drug Dependency Unit (code R2). 'Placed with own parent(s)' code is P1.

2.2.9 Placement provider

For each of the placements in Section 2.2.8, except those children looked after placed in temporary placements (T0 – T4) or other placements (Z1) a placement provider code is required. This will record information on the party providing the placement for each and every placement for a child looked after during the year. Children placed with their own parents do not strictly have a placement provider and should be allocated code PR0, only.

Codeset for placement provider

PR0	Parents or other person with parental responsibility
PR1	Own provision (by the local authority)
PR2	Other local authority provision
PR3	Other public provision (eg by a PCT etc.)
PR4	Private provision
PR5	Voluntary/third sector provision

Placement provider: notes and definitions

PR0: Parents or other person With parental responsibility

Children placed with parents (placement code P1) is the only placement that can be associated with code PR0, as there is no formal provider in this case.

PR1: Own provision (by the local authority)

The placement is provided by your local authority. This can be associated with all placements except:

- Children placed with parents (placement code P1);
- NHS/Health Trust or other establishment providing medical or nursing care (placement code of R2);
- Young offender institution or prison (placement code of R5).

PR2: Other local authority provision

The placement is provided by another local authority. This can be associated with all placements except:

- Children placed with parents (placement code P1);
- NHS/Health Trust or other establishment providing medical or nursing care (placement code of R2);
- Young offender institution or prison (placement code of R5).

PR3: Other public provision (eg by a PCT, etc.)

The placement is provided by public provision. This can be associated with all placements except:

- Children in foster care placements (placement codes U1-U6);
- Children placed for adoption (placement codes A3-A6);
- Children placed with parents (placement code P1);
- Placed in secure accommodation (placement code K1);

PR4: Private provision

The placement is provided by private provision (organisations run for profit). This can be associated with all placements except:

- Children placed for adoption (placement codes A3-A6);
- Children placed with parents (placement code P1).

PR5: Voluntary/third sector provision

The placement is provided by voluntary/third sector provision – organisations which are not run for profit. This can be associated with all placements except:

- Children placed with parents (placement code P1).
- Where the status of a foster carer changes from being a carer approved by a local authority (placement provider code PR1) to an agency carer (placement provider code PR2, PR4 or PR5), or vice versa, it is important that this change is recorded as a change of placement for the child. Code T should be used for the reason for new episode for the subsequent episode. Failure to record this change would mean that the count of children being fostered at any point in time under agency arrangements would not be correct. With an ever

increasing focus on costs and expenditure, it is important that the Department has access to accurate and up to date information.

A placement with a child's father can only be coded as P1, 'placed with parents', if the father has parental responsibility. If the parents were married at the time of birth, or subsequently marry, both parents have parental responsibility. Unmarried fathers can acquire parental responsibility either through a notarised agreement with the birth mother or through a court order.

Deciding whether a child should be placed for adoption, assessing the suitability of prospective adopters and matching the child with approved prospective adopters can only be done by adoption agencies under the ***Adoption and Children Act 2002***. Adoption Agencies are local authorities and voluntary, non-profit making adoption societies. Adoption Societies have to be registered with Ofsted. A local authority can place a child with prospective adopters it has approved itself, (PR1), or "buy" prospective adopters approved by another local authority (PR2) or by a registered adoption society (also known as voluntary adoption agency) (PR5).

2.2.10 Date episode ceased

This item records the date that each episode ended. This date will always fall in the current data year. Code day, month, and year as two digit numbers.

Example:

4 November 2015 should be entered as 04/11/15.

An episode cannot start and end on the same day. A continuation episode must start on the same day as the previous episode finished. If the episode does not end during the course of the year (and the child is being looked after on the night of the 31 March 2016), this field must be left blank.

When a child ceases to be looked after because of adoption (reason episode ceased codes of E11 or E12), the date episode ceased is the date the court makes the adoption order.

When a child ceases to be looked after because he/she dies whilst being looked after (reason episode ceased code E2), the date episode ceased must be the same as the date of death as recorded on the death certificate.

Periods of care in local authority accommodation of less than 24 hours must not be recorded on the SSDA903. The only exception to this rule is that where children who are being regularly accommodated under an agreed series of short-term placements

(legal status codes V3 and V4), overnight stays of less than 24 hours may be treated as 24 hours for statistical purposes.

2.2.11 Reason episode ceased

When an episode has ended and a further episode, in the same period of care, has started, use the code, **X1**. All other 'reason episode ceased' codes record the circumstances when a child ceases to be looked after. If a child ceases to be looked after because he/she has turned 18, this can already be deduced from his/her date of birth. Therefore, the appropriate code below should be used to capture the destination of the young person.

If an episode does not end during the course of the year (and the child is being looked after on the night of the 31 March 2017), this field must be left blank.

Codeset for reason episode ceased

X1	Episode ceases, and new episode begins on same day, for any reason
E11	Adopted - application for an adoption order unopposed
E12	Adopted – consent dispensed with by court
E2	Died
E3	Care taken over by another local authority in the UK
E4A	Return home to live with parents, relatives, or other person with parental responsibility as part of the care planning process (not under a special guardianship order or residence order or (from 22 April 2014) a child arrangements order).
E4B	Return home to live with parents, relatives, or other person with parental responsibility which was not part of the current care planning process (not under a special guardianship order or residence order or (from 22 April 2014) a child arrangements order).
E13	Left care to live with parents, relatives, or other person with <u>no</u> parental responsibility.
E41	Residence order (or, from 22 April 2014, a child arrangements order which sets out with whom the child is to live) granted.
E43	Special guardianship made to former foster carers
E44	Special guardianship made to carers other than former foster carers
E5	Moved into independent living arrangement and no longer looked after: supportive accommodation providing formalised advice/support arrangements (eg most hostels, YMCAs, foyers, and care leavers projects)
E6	Moved into independent living arrangement and no longer looked after : accommodation providing no formalised advice/support arrangements (eg bedsit, own flat, living with friends)
E7	Transferred to residential care funded by Adult Social Services
E9	Sentenced to custody
E14	Accommodation on remand ended

E15	Age assessment determined child is aged 18 or over and E5, E6 and E7 do not apply eg an unaccompanied asylum seeking child whose age has been disputed
E16	Child moved abroad
E8	Period of being looked after ceased for any other reason

Further detail on when some of the codes should be used is provided below:

E4A - relates to a planned move where the child returns home as part of their agreed care plan. This return home has been discussed as part of the care planning process and happens within a planned timeframe

E4B - relates to an unplanned move includes instances where the child's return home is immediate (eg within 24 hours) and has not been discussed as part of the care planning process or does not occur within the planned timeframe. This would include instances where a child under a voluntary arrangement is removed from care by their parents and this was not agreed as part of the care planning process.

E13 – Left care to live with parents, relatives, or other person with no parental responsibility – this code should be used if the child left care to live with parents, relatives or another person, but this person did not have parental responsibility.

E14 - Accommodation on remand ended- this code should be used if a child was remanded to youth detention accommodation and has stopped their episode of care because they are no longer remanded.

E15 - Age assessment determined child is aged 18 or over and E5, E6 and E7 do not apply eg an unaccompanied asylum seeking child whose age has been disputed- this code should be used if the episode of care ended because the age was disputed, an assessment revealed the child was 18 or over and the young person was not transferred to residential care and did not move into independent living arrangements.

E16 - Moved abroad - use this code if the child left care because they moved to another country, including when a child is deported.

If a looked after child is sent to prison/young offenders' institute, their status is dependent on their legal status. If a looked after child is subject to a Care Order (Section 31 Children Act 1989) then they remain looked after regardless of being sentenced to custody. If however a child is accommodated by a voluntary agreement under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989, then they cease to be looked after when they are admitted to custody.

2.2.12 Reason for placement change

Introduced in the 2015 to 2016 collection, for episodes that cease due to a change in placement, there is a requirement to record the reason for placement change using the code list detailed below. When a placement ceases due to a placement change, we would expect the reason episode ceased to be recorded as X1 (episode ceases and new episode begins on the same day) and we would expect the reason for new episode for the subsequent episode to be P, B, T or U (see change to *reason for new episode* at 2.2.2).

Some of the reasons may not be clear cut and may be a combination of factors. Social workers should make a judgement about the primary reason – eg both a carer and a child might want a placement to end but the request may be stronger from one side and would become the primary reason.

A placement is all valid placement types, including residential care, foster care, fostering for adoption [FFA] or placement with a connected person. Carer means residential unit, foster carer, FFA carer or connected person.

CARPL	Change to/Implementation of Care Plan	This code would be used where the change of placement is a planned part of the child's care plan and will be a move to a placement that meets the child's assessed needs on a temporary or permanent basis. This would include circumstances where a placement change was not expected but becomes necessary. The key factor is that planning takes place and the decision is recorded in the child's care plan before the change takes place. This would include moves from short to long term foster care or where a child is placed for adoption with the current foster carer. It also includes movements to semi-independence. The nature of the change in plan will be monitored through the placement codes before and after this move. This should not include changes where the foster carer has moved house or where the carer is the same but has changed provider type.
CLOSE	Resignation/closure of	This code would be used where a child has to be moved because a foster carer

	provision	<p>decides to resign or the setting closes e.g. children's home. This code would be used in a planned move not in an emergency. The foster carer's decision to resign may be because their circumstances have changed i.e. foster carer becomes ill or another change of circumstances means that the foster carer is no longer able to provide a placement for the child.</p> <p>Circumstances may also include where the child's placement had lasted longer than expected and the foster carer is no longer able to provide a placement for the child. Use of this code would also include where a setting (e.g. children's home or a fostering service) closes and is therefore no longer a registered provision with Ofsted.</p>
ALLEG	Allegation (s47)	<p>This code would be used where a child has been removed from placement because of an allegation which is being investigated under s47 (CA 1989). This allegation may relate to the carer or another child at the setting. This code should not be used if the allegation has resulted in the setting's approval (e.g. children's home or a fostering service) being terminated – in this case, 'approval removed' should be used.</p>
STAND	Standards of Care concern	<p>This code would be used where a child has been removed from placement by the responsible authority or provider as a result of concerns about standards of care. This does not mean a child protection investigation (s47) but a formal process followed by the provider. For example, see the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Service 2011, standard. 22. This code can be used for all types of placement e.g. foster care, residential care. This code should not be used if the setting's approval is terminated as a result of standards of</p>

		care concerns – in this case, ‘approval removed’ should be used.
APPRR	Approval removed	This code would be used where a setting is no longer approved/registered with the appropriate statutory body (e.g. Ofsted). This code can be used for all types of placement e.g. foster care, residential care. For example this code should be used where a foster carer’s approval is terminated by the service following a s47 investigation, a standards of care issue, a complaint or for other reasons that relate to the carers’ conduct. It should also be used where Ofsted take enforcement action resulting in the closure of a residential setting. This code should not be used when a foster carer resigns or a provision is closed voluntarily and they are no longer registered with the relevant statutory body (e.g. Ofsted).
CREQB	Carer requests placement end due to child’s behaviour	This code would be used where because of the child’s behaviour the placement has broken down or disrupted, and the carer has asked for the placement to end and the child to be moved to another placement. There may be some planning involved and a short period of time may pass but this is not a planned move.
CREQO	Carer requests placement end other than due to child’s behaviour	These codes would be used where it was intended that the placement was a short or long term arrangement but has broken down or disrupted and the carer [foster carer, residential unit or connected person] has asked for the child to be moved to another placement. There may be some planning involved and a short period of time may pass but this is not a planned move.
CHILD	Child requests placement	This code would be used where it was intended that the placement was a short or

	end	long term arrangement but has broken down or disrupted and the child has asked to move to another placement. There may be some planning involved and a short period of time may pass but this is not a planned move.
LAREQ	Responsible/Area authority requests placement end	This code would be used where it was intended that the placement was a short or long term placement but the responsible authority has decided that the placement no longer meets the child's needs. There may be some planning involved and a short period of time may pass but this is not a planned move. There will be circumstances where the child is at risk of harm and this would be coded as an allegation or standards of care concern. Where the placement no longer meets a child's need but there is no immediate risk – this code would be used
PLACE	Change in the status of placement only	This code would be used where there is a change of status for the placement but the child remains with the same carer and there is no change to the care plan, for example if a foster carer moves house, or a foster carer working for a local authority becomes managed by an independent fostering agency. Here the 'reason for new episode' code will indicate that the child is still living with the same carer.
OTHER	Other	Any other reason not captured above

It is optional for local authorities to record temporary placements. If a temporary placement (T0-T4) is recorded, then local authorities are not required to submit a 'reason for placement change' code for either the previous placement prior to the temporary placement, or the temporary placement itself. If a child is in a temporary placement then returns to a different placement immediately afterwards, then the temporary placement (T0-T4) should be ignored and the placement move will be

recorded in the same way as any other. In this case, a reason for placement change would be required.

Example 1

Richard, 17, was placed with a family of five; two very experienced foster carers and their three birth children aged 7, 12 and 15. Richard had been in care for three years at the time of the placement. This was Richard's second placement. His first placement broke down because his foster carers felt that they couldn't manage Richard's behaviour any longer. This placement was arranged at short notice. Richard presented very challenging behaviour when he moved in with his new foster family. He was very aggressive and got into arguments with the other children causing constant friction. This situation made the foster carers very upset and was taking a toll on the rest of the family. The foster carers frequently contacted the supervising social worker to seek help. They left numerous messages but did not get a call back or any support. The foster carers did not have access to the support and training required to meet Richard's complex needs.

It became apparent that the placement was not a good match for Richard and the foster carer expressed this to their supervising social worker.

Code: Carer requests placement end due to child's behaviour.

Things to consider

- If the foster carers requested support but the social worker made the decision to end the placement, then 'Responsible/Area authority requests placement end' code may be more appropriate
- If Richard states that he no longer wants to live with the foster carers then 'Child requests placement end' code will apply

Example 2

Ruby, 9, was removed from her parents and placed with emergency foster carers who had no other children in placement or birth children. This was Ruby's first placement and she quickly settled into her new home and seemed happy with her new foster carers so all parties, including Ruby, agreed that she would remain in this placement until the family assessment was completed. Ruby entered care because her social worker was concerned that she had been subject to physical abuse. Work

with Ruby's family and other agencies who expressed concern was on-going to establish whether Ruby could return home with support, or if a longer term placement would be needed. After the first few weeks in placement, Ruby's parents presented threatening and harassing behaviour towards her foster carers by phone and by turning up at the house demanding to see their child. These continued on and off for a period of four months despite intervention, clear boundaries and support for the family from the local authority. At the care planning review the issue about Ruby's safety was raised and discussed. Those present agreed that it was in Ruby's best interest to remain with the current foster carers until the local authority found her a suitable placement.

Two months later, Ruby moved to a new placement and details of her new home were not disclosed to her parents.

Code: Change to/Implementation of Care Plan

Things to consider

If Ruby's foster carers decided that they could not cope with the harassment from Ruby's birth parents and requested that the placement end then 'Carer requests placements end other than due to child's behaviour' code would be used

If Ruby's social worker was concerned that Ruby's parents were causing too much disruption and ended the placement then 'Responsible/Area authority requests placement end' code would be used

Example 3

At 11, Reema was placed in her third foster care placement. Reema entered care when she was 9. Her first placement was a short term arrangement which lasted six months. The second was a planned long term placement which lasted 18 months. This placement ended because Reema's social worker was concerned that the placement was not meeting Reema's needs. Her foster carers were inexperienced and struggled to balance Reema's need for attention with the needs of their own birth children, aged 3 and 5. When they agreed to the placement, they did not realise how challenging it would be to look after three children. This placement had a planned ending.

Reema was matched to experienced foster carers, who had a birth child, Peter, age 13. Two months into the placement Reema told her teacher that Peter was 'very touchy' and that this made her feel uncomfortable. Reema's teacher raised this with her foster carers who expressed concern and agreed it would be appropriate to raise the matter with Reema's social worker. When the foster carers raised this issue with

their supervising social worker and Reema's social worker they were offered further information about statements Reema had made in her two previous placements about inappropriate touch. The foster carers had not been given any information about this at the placement planning stage. Reema had also made a serious allegation against her previous foster carer – a matter that had not been disclosed to her current foster carers before. The foster carers expressed concern about the placement match and the risk that they and their son had been placed at. Reema's social worker confirmed that she would speak to Reema about the comments she had made to her teacher and that the matter would be treated seriously – possibly resulting in an investigation.

The local authority removed Reema from the placement.

Code: Allegation (s47)

Things to consider

If the foster carers had requested that the placement end due to concerns about the risk to themselves and their son of further allegations then the Carer requests placement end due to child's behaviour code could be used

If all parties agreed that the placement was not a good match but there was no immediate risk of harm to Reema, and the local authority would provide support to the foster family until a suitable alternative placement was found then the Change to/Implementation of Care Plan code could be used

2.3 Review information

To be collected for children looked after for at least 20 working days during the year ending 31 March

2.3.1 Date of each statutory review

The dates of each statutory (looked after children or adoption) review during the year will be recorded for all children looked after excluding those looked after under an agreed series of short term placements. At least one review should be recorded for children who have been looked after continuously for at least 20 working days where this period of care falls partly or wholly in the year to 31 March 2017. Further information under the terms set out in the [Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review](#).

All dates should be recorded in a DD/MM/YYYY format ie day/month/year as a four digit number.

Examples:

Date 15 November 1994: enter as 15/11/1994.

Date 24 January 2013: enter as 24/01/2013

(manual amendments only may be made using DD/MM/YY, but will appear as DD/MM/YYYY).

Do not include dates of other reviews such as secure reviews.

2.3.2 Method of participation in each review

For each statutory review date submitted the method of participation in that review is required. Codeset for method of participation

PN0	Child aged under 4 at the time of the review	
PN1	Child physically attends and speaks for him or herself	Attendance
PN2	Child physically attends and an advocate speaks on his or her behalf	Attendance views represented by advocate or Independent Reviewing Officer(IRO)
PN3	Child attends and conveys his or her view symbolically (non-verbally)	Attendance symbols
PN4	Child physically attends but does not speak for him or herself, does not convey his or her view symbolically (non-verbally) and does not ask an advocate to speak for him or her	Attendance without contribution
PN5	Child does not attend physically but briefs an advocate to speak for him or her	Views represented by advocate or (IRO) texting, written format, phone, audio/ video, CD ROM, viewpoint

PN6	Child does not attend but conveys his or her feelings to the review by a facilitative medium	Texting the chair written format, phone, audio, video, CD ROM, viewpoint
PN7	Child does not attend nor are his or her views conveyed to the review	

Definition of an advocate

An advocate can be an independent advocate from a national organisation, an independent advocate attached to a local authority children's rights service, or someone of the child's choice (for example a friend, relative, teacher or social worker). It is important that children and young people have an advocate of their choice, but there may be circumstances where an 'unprofessional' advocate may not have the skills or experience required and so the child should be assisted by the Children's Rights Officer, Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) or equivalent member of staff, to understand the choices available to them.

For more information please refer to the national standards for the provision of children's advocacy services.

Definition of 'making a meaningful contribution'

By participation we essentially mean 'make a meaningful contribution'. It is part of the Independent Reviewing Officer's (IRO) role to determine whether the child has made a meaningful contribution and complete the statistical return accordingly.

For example, if a child attended the review but only said "it's raining outside" throughout the review, this would be taken as not participating (and coded PN4, child physically attends but does not speak for him or herself, does not convey his or her views symbolically, and does not ask an advocate to speak for him or her). However, a child nodding when asked "Would you like to stay with your foster carer?" could be taken as participating (and coded PN3, child attends and conveys his or her views symbolically).

To note Viewpoint is interactive computer software especially designed to capture the views and wishes of children and young people.

2.4 Unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC)

Information on whether a child is UASC should be collected for all looked after children on the SSDA903.

2.4.1 UASC status

Unaccompanied asylum seeking child (UASC)

If the child has been an unaccompanied asylum seeking child (UASC) at any time in 2016 to 2017 this must be recorded.

Codeset for unaccompanied asylum seeking child (UASC)

0	Child has not been an UASC during the year
1	Child has been an UASC during the year

2.4.2 Date UASC status ceased

A UASC status may end if the child is granted refugee status or independent leave to remain. For children who were granted Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR) before it was abolished, the child will no longer be a UASC if the child was granted ELR on humanitarian grounds. If the child was granted ELR until their 18th birthday, the child is still counted as a UASC. If UASC status ceases the day, month and year (as two digit numbers) should be recorded. In all other circumstances, this field should be left blank.

The loss of UASC status should only be entered if it occurred in the current statistical year. In all cases, UASC status will cease on a child's 18th birthday.

2.5 Adoptions (AD1)

2.5.1 Purpose of items collected relating to children adopted from care

There are six key data items to be completed in respect of children adopted from care during the year ending 31 March 2017 (see below 2.5.8 to 2.5.13 of this guide for details of each item). The purpose of these items is to collect detailed information about every child who was adopted from care during the year. This data relates to both the child and his or her adoptive parents.

2.5.2 Children for whom these data items should be completed

These items on the SSDA903 should be completed for all children who ceased to be looked after at some point during the year ending 31 March 2017, on the granting of an adoption order. All of these children will have been placed with their adoptive parents before the making of the adoption order. During this period they should be treated as being 'placed for adoption', and should only be recorded as ceasing to be looked after on the day the adoption order was made.

If a child has been adopted during the course of the year, it is important that all six data items relating to the adoption are completed.

2.5.3 Validation

The data will be checked for consistency in the order of the dates regarding the adoption process.

2.5.4 Stages of an adoption

Before a looked after child can be adopted, the local authority must first make the decision that adoption is in the child's best interest. This is known as the 'date should be placed' in the SSDA903 CLA application. Suitable prospective adopters are then found before the child is placed for adoption for at least 10 weeks before the adoption order is granted and the child ceases to be looked after.

It therefore follows that:

- The date the child started to be looked after in the latest period of care will generally be before the date should be placed; however it is feasible for a placement order to be obtained instead of a care order.
- The date should be placed must be before or the same as the date of matching the child and prospective adopters;
- The date of matching the child and prospective adopters must be before or the same as the date the child was placed for adoption.

2.5.5 How should a S84 order for a child adopted outside England be recorded? And what if they subsequently return to be looked after in England?

Although a S84 Order is not the same as an adoption order, the child should be treated in the same way as if an adoption order had been granted. The child should be recorded as ceasing care with reason episode ceased as E11 or E12 as

appropriate and the additional adoption items should then be completed in the usual way. If the child returns to England to be looked after, for any reason, a new child record should be created for their new period of care with a different child ID to retain confidentiality.

2.5.6 Special guardianship orders

The information referred to in this section for a looked after child who was adopted is not required for those children who cease to be looked after due to the making of a special guardianship order. Local authority contacts do not need to provide the date when the decision to adopt the child was made, or the date of matching the child with the prospective adopters or any information on the prospective adopters. However if the decision has previously been made that the child should be placed for adoption or that decision has been reversed then these details should be included in the relevant section (see section 2.6). Similarly, information on children who have returned to care after previously being the subject of a special guardianship order should be included in the data items relating to previous permanent arrangements (see section 2.7). Special guardianship orders should also be recorded as a reason why a child is no longer looked after, where applicable.

2.5.7 Dates

Two out of the six data items required for children adopted from care are dates, and refer to the various steps in the adoption process. In each case, the date required is the final decision date of your local authority, and not the date of the Adoption Panel's recommendations. There is a logical sequence to these decisions, which should be reflected in the dates on which they occur – (see above section 2.5.4 on 'Stages of adoption' in this guide).

All dates should be recorded in a DD/MM/YYYY format ie day/month/year as a four digit number.

Examples:

Date should be placed for adoption 15 November 1994: enter as 15/11/1994.

Date should be placed for adoption 24 January 2013: enter as 24/01/2013.

(manual amendments only may be made using DD/MM/YY, but will appear as DD/MM/YYYY).

2.5.8 Date of decision child should be placed for adoption

This is the date on which the local authority formally decides that a child should be placed for adoption. This decision must not be confused with the one made at the statutory review, ie the four month statutory review, when adoption might be considered the preferred option for permanence (otherwise referred to as the Adoption Plan). At this point, the local authority is only considering adoption and will begin to complete the child's permanence report for consideration by the local authority's decision maker. This date could be during the current year or in previous years. This date should be consistent with that defined in paragraph 2.6.1.

If the child is adopted by the foster carer or relatives with whom he/she is already placed and the adoption went ahead with the approval of the local authority then the date should be entered as the date of the decision that the child should be placed for adoption. If the adoption was without the approval of the local authority, the date that the adoption application was lodged with the court should be used to complete this item.

2.5.9 Date of matching child and prospective adopters

This is the date on which the local authority formally decides that the child should be placed for adoption with the particular prospective adopters. If the child is adopted by the foster carer or relatives with whom he/she is already placed, the date of decision (defined in 2.5.8) should be entered for this data item.

2.5.10 Whether child adopted by former foster carers

It should be recorded if a child was adopted by former foster carers, the code-set used here is:

Codeset for whether children adopted by former foster carers

0	Child not adopted by former foster carers
1	Child adopted by former foster carers

2.5.11 Number of adopters

The number of person(s) adopting the looked after child should be recorded as 1 or 2 adopters.

Codeset for number of adopters

1	Child has been adopted by 1 person
2	Child has been adopted by 2 people

2.5.12 Gender of adopters

The gender of adopters, both single and couples, should be recorded:

Codeset for gender of adopters

M1	The single adopter is male
F1	The single adopter is female
MM	The adopting couple are both males
FF	The adopting couple are both females
MF	The adopting couple are female and male

2.5.13 Legal status of adopters

The codeset for the data item 'Legal Status of Adopters' was extended following the Royal Assent to the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act in July 2013, allowing same-sex marriages to be performed from summer 2014.

Codeset for legal status of adopters

L0	Single adopter
L11	Different gender married couple
L12	Same gender married couple
L2	Civil partnership couple
L3	Different gender unmarried couple
L4	Same gender couple not married or in a civil partnership

A civil partnership is a legal relationship formed by two people who are of the same sex (Civil Partnership Act 2004).

2.6 Children who should/should no longer be placed for adoption

This section on the SSDA903 should be completed for children for whom the decision is made, either during the current year or in a previous year, that the child should be placed for adoption or for whom the decision is made during the year that the child should no longer be placed for adoption. Two out of the three data items required are dates. Collecting this information will enable the Department to analyse where there has been a change in the permanence plan for the child.

All dates should be recorded in a DD/MM/YYYY format ie day/month/year as a four digit number.

Examples:

Date of decision that a child should be placed for adoption 24 January 2008:
enter as 24/01/2008.

Date of decision that a child should no longer be placed for adoption 15 March
2008: enter as 15/03/2008.

2.6.1 Date of decision that the child should be placed for adoption

This is the date on which the local authority formally decides that a child should be placed for adoption. This decision must not be confused with the one made at the statutory review, ie the four month statutory review, when adoption might be considered the preferred option for permanence (otherwise referred to as the Adoption Plan). At this point, the local authority is only considering adoption and will begin to complete the child's permanence report for consideration by the local authority's decision maker. This date could be during the current year or in a previous year. This date should be consistent with that defined in paragraph 2.5.8.

2.6.2 Date of decision that the child should no longer be placed for adoption

This is the date the local authority formally decides that the child should no longer be placed for adoption. This decision would be taken after a review has been made of the child's case under Regulation 36 of the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005. If it is decided that the child should no longer be placed for adoption, the local authority should revise the child's Care Plan and apply to the court to revoke the placement order. Any care order will be reactivated.

The local authority is required to regularly review the child's case. The local authority may decide to remove the child from the home of the prospective adopters or the prospective adopters may return the child to the local authority. If either scenario happens, it does not automatically mean that adoption is no longer the plan for the child. The local authority may well place the child with other prospective adopters.

2.6.3 Reason why the child should no longer be placed for adoption

For each child for whom the decision has been taken that they are no longer to be placed for adoption, record the reason for that decision via the codes below.

Codeset for Reason for Reversal of Decision to Adopt

RD1	The child's needs changed subsequent to the decision
RD2	The Court did not make a placement order

RD3	Prospective adopters could not be found
RD4	Any other reason

2.7 Return to care after or during previous permanent arrangement

This should be completed for all children who start to be looked after at any point in the latest year. We would expect that local authorities would gather this information about the child's background and family history when they assess the child and assemble the care plan for the child.

Information is collected for children who previously ceased to be looked after due to the granting of an adoption order, a special guardianship order, residence order (until 22 April 2014) or a child arrangements order. The following should be included:

- children who start to be looked after due to respite care arrangement
- children who start to be looked after under section 20 (legal status of V2).
- all children who start to be looked after following a previous adoption, special guardianship order (SGO) or residence order (RO) (or, from 22 April, a child arrangements order which sets out with whom the child is to live) even when the child then ceases to be looked after and returns home following the episode of care.

The information is required only once, the first time a child returns to care after the previous permanence order was granted, even if that was in a previous year. If the child subsequently leaves care (other than for adoption, SGO or RO) and returns again, this information is not required for the subsequent return.

This new module will include 3 new data items:

2.7.1 Previous permanence option

The codeset for this field will be:

P1	Adoption
P2	Special Guardianship Order
P3	Residence Order or child arrangements order which sets out with whom the child is to live.
P4	Unknown
Z1	Child has not previously had a permanence option

P4 should be used when it is not known whether the child had a previous permanence option.

Do not include any adoptions/SGO/ROs previously granted where the child was not previously looked after.

2.7.2 Local authority code where previous permanence option was arranged

The code of the local authority who arranged the previous permanence option, if this information is not available then the code 999 should be used.

Where the child was looked after outside England the following codeset should be used:

NIR	Northern Ireland
NUK	Outside of the UK
SCO	Scotland
WAL	Wales

If local authority boundaries have changed since this option was arranged please use the code at the time of the adoption/SGO/RO.

If a child was adopted by an adopter found through a voluntary adoption agency (VAA) record the local authority which was previously looking after the child. Similarly if a child was adopted by a foster carer who applied directly to the court to adopt the child, then record the local authority which was previously looking after the child.

2.7.3 Date of order

Record the date of the order if known in the form dd/mm/yyyy.

If the exact date is unknown record the month and year in the form zz/mm/yyyy, using zz as the day, ie for May 2010 with the exact date being unknown enter zz/05/2010.

If the month is unknown please record the year in the form zz/zz/yyyy, for example, where the year of 2010 only is known enter zz/zz/2010. If no information is known about the date of the order please record as zz/zz/zzzz.

2.8 Children missing from care

This module collects data on children who are missing from care or away from their placement without authorisation. All such episodes during the year should be recorded, regardless of duration, along with the start/end date of the incident.

2.8.1 Missing

Record each episode where a child was 'missing' or 'away from placement without authorisation' during the year according to the following definitions:

M	<i>Missing from care</i> : a looked after child who is not at their placement or the place they are expected to be (eg school) and their whereabouts is not known;
A	<i>Away from placement without authorisation</i> : a looked after child whose whereabouts is known but who is not at their placement or place they are expected to be and the carer has concerns or the incident has been notified to the local authority or the police.

Any children who were missing from care or away from placement without authorisation for any length of time between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017 should be recorded. This includes children who were missing from care or away from placement without authorisation before the start of the year if the episode was ongoing into the year. It also includes children who went missing from care or away from placement without authorisation during the year and where the episode continued after 31 March 2017, as well as those who returned during the year.

Further details on supporting children who are missing or away from placement without authorisation are provided in [revised statutory guidance](#) on children who runaway or go missing from home or care, published in January 2014.

2.8.2 Missing episode start date

The missing episode start date should be completed for both missing episodes and episodes where the child was away from placement without authorisation. It should be the date the child left his or her normal placement or the date the child was last seen by a responsible adult (whichever was the latest). For this purpose, a responsible adult is either the child's carer, or a professional directly associated with the child's welfare or education (eg doctor, school teacher, social worker etc). The missing episode start date could be in a previous year.

2.8.3 Missing episode end date

The missing episode end date should be completed for both missing episodes and episodes where the child was away from placement without authorisation. It should be the date that the child was found (where whereabouts are unknown) or the date that the child returned to his/her normal placement (where whereabouts known). If the child was still missing or away from placement without authorisation at the end of the year, then this field should be left blank.

Additional Notes

If a missing from care or away from placement without authorisation episode starts and ends within the same day, then the same date should be returned for the start and end dates. Similarly, if more than one missing episode occurs within the same day, separate episodes should be recorded but these should have the same start/end dates.

If a child is away from placement without authorisation, but they subsequently become missing (ie their whereabouts become unknown), this should be recorded as two separate episodes, but the end date of the away from placement without authorisation episode should be the same as the start date of the missing episode. This should be the point at which the child's whereabouts became unknown. Equally, there may be some circumstances where the whereabouts of a missing child become known such that he/she is no longer considered to be missing, but the child is still not where they are supposed to be. A new 'away from placement without authorisation' episode should be recorded, and this would have a start date consistent with the date of the end of the missing episode. This should be the date the child's whereabouts became known.

For children who start to be looked after when missing, record the placement arranged for the child had the child not been missing, then add details of the missing child to the missing module.

If a child ceases to be looked after whilst still missing (e.g. they turn 18) then please enter an end date for the missing/away from placement without authorisation which is equal to the date the child ceased to be looked after.

2.9 OC2 (to be collected for children continuously looked after for 12 months at 31 March)

2.9.1 Merging the OC2 return into the SSDA903

Some of the information previously collected via the Outcome Indicators for Children Looked After (OC2) Return was previously added to the children looked after return

(SSDA903). With the exception of data on attainment, absence and exclusions, since 2009-2010 collection of the SSDA903 return has been the source for all other data items previously collected via the OC2.

2.9.2 Background to the OC2 return

In 1999 the Government established a set of objectives for Children's Social Services. One of these is 'To ensure that children looked after gain maximum life chance benefits from educational opportunities, health care and social care'. The various outcome indicators provided by the OC2 annual collection help the Department to monitor the extent to which this objective is being achieved by English local authorities.

2.9.3 Children covered by this return

This return only applies to children who were looked after on the 31 March 2017, and had been looked after continuously by your local authority for at least twelve months on that date ie those looked after continuously since at least 1 April 2016. Such children will automatically be picked up by the CLA application and the further information described below will be requested.

Include 'missing' children

Children who are missing from their agreed placement and do not return to the care of your local authority, should be regarded as remaining in care until their 18th birthday and included in this return accordingly.

Include children placed for adoption

Children placed for adoption (placement codes A3, A4, A5 or A6) are still looked after until the adoption order has been made, thus your local authority should continue to collect information until the adoption order has been made.

Include unaccompanied asylum seekers (UASC) who are looked after

unaccompanied asylum seekers (UASC) who are looked after in accordance with the provisions of the Children Act 1989 should be included in each section even if the information is unknown eg no medical record.

Do not include children subject to a 'respite care' agreement

Exclude any children who had been looked after at any point during the twelve month period ending 31 March 2017 under an agreed series of short term breaks. This represents legal status codes V3 or V4.

2.9.4 Child convicted during the year

To be completed for all children aged 10 or over at 31 March 2017 who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months. This would include such children who were born on or before 31 March 2007. Record whether the child was convicted or subject to a youth caution (simple and conditional) under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 during the year for an offence committed while being looked after.

Include offences committed before 1 April 2016 if the charge was not brought until some point during the twelve months ending 31 March 2017 and the offence was committed while the child was looked after. Do not count offences committed while the child was not looked after.

A breach of an order is not regarded as a new offence unless it relates to an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO). In the case of a breach of an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO), a new offence is deemed to have occurred.

Codeset for child convicted during the year

0	Child has not been convicted or subject to a youth caution during the year
1	Child has been convicted or subject to a youth caution during the year

2.9.5 Health surveillance checks up to date

To be completed for all children aged under 5 at 31 March 2017 who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months. This would include such children who were born on or after 1 April 2012. Record whether the child's health surveillance or health promotion checks were up-to-date.

Include in this count children who missed earlier health checks, providing they had received their later checks. These health checks are covered by the child health surveillance programme (see LAC (2002) 16 and Children Act (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2002) the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010.

A child is considered up-to-date if child health surveillance or child health promotion checks have taken place by 31 March, even if they took place later than they should have done. If a child has missed all their previous health checks except the most recent, they should still be counted as being up-to-date.

Codeset for health surveillance check

0	Child's health surveillance or health promotion checks were not up to date
1	Child's health surveillance or health promotion checks were up to date

2.9.6 Immunisations up to date

To be completed for all children at 31 March 2017 who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months. Record whether the child's immunisations were up to date by the end of 31 March.

For the purposes of this collection 'up to date' means that by 31 March the child has had all the immunisations that a child of their age should have received, according to the [immunisation timetable](#) reproduced by the Department of Health and in Appendix 1. It is not a requirement of this question that the child received the immunisations strictly at the ages set out here, but merely that by 31 March the child's immunisations had been brought 'up to date', even if they were given late according to the immunisation timetable.

This question is not restricted to immunisations which were due while the child was looked after. It includes immunisations which should have been given before the child became looked after.

In cases where children have not received their immunisations because of parental refusal, for health reasons, or because the young person refuses, they should be counted as not being up-to-date.

Assessing whether a person's immunisations are up-to-date is primarily a clinical decision and we do not expect staff of social services departments who do not necessarily have relevant clinical training or access to the child's medical records to make this decision on their own. For the purposes of this collection, an opinion from a doctor or practice nurse that a young person's immunisations are up-to-date is sufficient.

The information that follows is given as background information to explain the context of this question. It is not intended to be a substitute for the clinical judgement of a doctor or nurse.

Meningitis C

Meningitis C at 2, 3 and 4 months became part of the routine childhood programme in November 1999. A catch-up programme to immunise every child under 18 was completed at the end of 2001. If a young person who is looked after is found to have missed the catch-up programme, they should be immunised at their local GP surgery.

Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib)

Unimmunised children aged between 13 and 48 months should be given a single injection of Hib vaccine (either simultaneously with MMR or singly, if MMR already given). A routine immunisation of children aged more than 48 months (4th birthday)

with the Hib vaccine is generally not recommended; where a child is aged older than their 4th birthday but has not had this vaccination you should still regard their vaccinations as being up-to-date.

Codeset for immunisations

0	Child's immunisations were not up to date
1	Child's immunisations were up to date

2.9.7 Teeth checked by a dentist

To be completed for all children at 31 March 2017 who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months. Record whether the child had their teeth checked by a dentist in the year ending 31 March. Treat children who declined to have their teeth checked as not having received a dental check.

All children covered in this cohort can be expected to have their teeth checked. Very young children should still have an oral examination even if their teeth have not yet developed. For very young children the examination does not have to be undertaken by a dentist and an examination by a paediatrician or other healthcare professional which included an oral examination may be counted.

Codeset for teeth check

0	Child did not have their teeth checked by a dentist
1	Child did have their teeth checked by a dentist

2.9.8 Annual health assessment up to date

To be completed for all children at 31 March 2017 who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months. Record whether the child received their annual health assessment from a doctor or other suitably qualified professional during the year ending 31 March. Treat children who declined to have a health assessment as not having received an annual health assessment (see LAC (2002) 16 and Children Act (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2002).

Health assessments must be carried out twice a year for those under 5 years of age. Both these assessments must be carried out in order for the Annual Assessment requirement to be satisfied for under 5s. The assessment should be carried out once in every period of six months before the child's fifth birthday. This means that one assessment should be carried out in the first six months and one in the second six months. For those aged 5 or over, a single annual assessment fulfils the requirement.

Codeset for annual health assessment

0	Child did not have their annual Health Assessment
1	Child had their annual Health Assessment

2.9.9 Child identified as having a substance misuse problem

To be completed for all children at 31 March 2017 who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months. Record whether the child was identified as having a substance misuse problem during the year ending 31 March.

The term 'drug' is used to refer to any psychotropic substance, including illegal drugs, illicit use of prescription drugs and volatile substances. Young people's drug taking is often inextricably linked with the consumption of alcohol. Therefore the term 'substance' refers to both drugs and alcohol but not tobacco. Substance misuse is defined as 'intoxication by (or regular excessive consumption or and/or dependence on) psychoactive substances, leading to social, psychological, physical or legal problems'. It includes problematic use of both legal and illegal drugs (including alcohol when used in combination with other substances).

Codeset for substance misuse problem identified

0	Child was not identified as having a substance misuse problem
1	Child was identified as having a substance misuse problem

2.9.10 Child received intervention for substance misuse problem

To be completed for all children at 31 March 2017 who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months who were identified as having a substance misuse problem during the year ending 31 March (ie those which had a code of 1 for the previous question). Record whether the child received an intervention for their substance misuse problem. For those children who had a code of 0 for the previous question please leave this blank.

For children with more than one type of substance misuse problem, record 1 in this item if they received an intervention for any of them. This is irrespective of whether they did not receive an intervention for any of their other substance misuse problems. If they did not receive an intervention for all of their substance misuse problems, then record 0.

Codeset for intervention received for substance misuse

0	Child did not receive an intervention for their substance misuse problem
1	Child received an intervention for their substance misuse problem

2.9.11 Child offered intervention for substance misuse problem

To be completed for all children at 31 March 2017 who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months who were identified as having a substance misuse problem during the year ending 31 March but who did not receive an intervention (ie those which had a code of 0 for the previous 2.9.10 question in this guide). Record whether the child was offered an intervention for their substance misuse problem, but refused it or whether they were not offered an intervention. For those children who had a code of 0 for the question in Section 2.9.9 or a code of 1 in the previous question (2.9.10 of this guide), please leave this blank.

For children who had more than one type of substance misuse problem and who did not receive an intervention for all of them, record 1 in this data item if they were offered an intervention for any of them, but refused. If they were not offered an intervention for all of their substance misuse problems, then record 0. Only count an intervention as being refused if it hasn't been previously or isn't subsequently accepted.

Codeset for intervention offered for substance misuse

0	Child was not offered an intervention for their substance misuse problem
1	Child was offered an intervention for their substance misuse problem but refused it

More detailed guidance on the collection of the substance misuse data items may be found in Appendix 2.

2.9.12 Strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) score

Purpose of the Return

Evidence suggests that mental health problems are over four times more likely for looked after children compared to their peers. Carers continue to report that they find it difficult to access appropriate child and adolescent mental health services. The Government sees it as critical to address the issue of mental health of children looked after in order to improve both their outcomes and life chances. This data item covers the emotional and behavioural health of children looked after, as recorded by a main carer in the strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ).

Statutory guidance on promoting the health and well-being of looked after children issued under Section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 sets out that all local authorities are required (paragraph 9.11.2) to make sure that a strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) is completed for each of their looked after

children aged between 4-16 inclusive. Paragraph 9.11.3 of the guidance states how this should be embedded into the child's annual health assessment.

While local authorities may use alternative screening/diagnostic tools in order to monitor the emotional/mental health of their looked after children, nevertheless they must carry out the SDQ assessment in line with the above guidance.

Children covered by this return

This information will be required for all children (and young people) who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months on 31 March 2017 and who were aged between 4 years old and 16 years old (inclusive) on the date of the last assessment (the date of the assessment will be up to local authorities to decide but it will occur at least once in an annual cycle). Therefore, children aged between 4 years and 16 years 364 days at the time of their last assessment will be included.

Any child looked after at any point during the 12 month period ending 31 March 2017 under an agreed series of short term breaks should not have a SDQ score completed.

Data submitted

Local authorities will collect data through a standard strengths and difficulties questionnaire. Further guidance is available at Appendix 3.

A single score (0–40), or a reason for the score not being returned is required for each child looked after continuously for at least 12 months at 31 March 2017 aged 4–16 on the date of the last assessment.

2.9.13 Reason for not submitting SDQ score

If it is not possible to collect the SDQ score for a looked after child, then please record the reason using the codes below.

Codeset for reason for not submitting an SDQ score

SDQ1	No form returned as child was aged under 4 or over 17 at date of latest assessment
SDQ2	Carer refused to complete and return questionnaire
SDQ3	Not possible to complete the questionnaire due to severity of the child's disability
SDQ4	Other
SDQ5	Child or young person refuses to allow an SDQ to be completed

Summary

Children aged 4 or 17 at 31 March may or may not have been in the age group for whom an SDQ score is required at their last assessment. The following table summarises the information that should be entered depending on the child or young person's age at the date of their last assessment and 31 March.

Age at last assessment	Age at 31 March	Data to be returned
3 or under	3 or under	Leave both SDQ score and reason empty
3	4	Leave score empty, use SDQ1 as the reason for no score
4-16	4-16	Enter an SDQ score (0-40) or a reason for no score (SDQ2-SDQ5)
16	17	Enter an SDQ score (0-40) or a reason for no score (SDQ2-SDQ5)
17	17	Leave score empty, use SDQ1 as the reason for no score
17 or over	18 or over	Leave both SDQ score and reason empty

2.10 OC3 (care leaver's information)

In 2016, the cohort of young people for whom this information should be returned is being expanded to include relevant and former relevant children whose 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th or 21st birthday falls within the collection period. As this is the first year that we are collecting information about 17-year-olds, this is the first time we are collecting information about children who are currently relevant children (see definitions of 'relevant' and 'former relevant' children below).

2.10.1 Purpose of data items for children who have recently left care

There are four key data items that we are asking local authorities to provide in relation to care leavers: whether the local authority is 'in-touch' with them; the young person's activity status; and what type of accommodation they are living in (and whether it is judged to be suitable accommodation). These data are used to monitor whether care leavers are receiving the support they need to make a successful transition to adulthood.

2.10.2 Young people for whom this information is required

This year we are collecting information on relevant children and former relevant children whose 17th, 18th 19th, 20th and 21st birthdays fell within the collection year.

For the 2016 to 2017 collection, this therefore covers young people whose date of birth is between 1 April 1995 and 31 March 2000.

Relevant children are defined under Section 23A(2) of the Children Act 1989.

A relevant child is:

- a young person aged 16 or 17
- is no longer looked after
- before last ceasing to be looked after, was an 'eligible child' (see definition below)

OR

- a young person aged 16 or 17
- not subject to a care order
- detained, or in hospital on their 16th birthday
- immediately before being detained or admitted to hospital had been looked after for at least 13 weeks which began after they reached age 14.

The 13 weeks can be a continuous period or a series of episodes.

In calculating the 13 weeks, pre-planned short breaks of less than 17 days (which do not exceed 75 days in any 12 month period), where the child was not in the care of a local authority and afterwards returned to live with someone with parental responsibility should not be included. However, pre-planned short breaks that do not meet this test should be included in the calculation of the 13 weeks.

A child who has lived for a continuous period of 6 months or more (whether that period commenced before or after they ceased to be looked after) with their parent, someone who has parental responsibility or, where they were in care and there was a residence order (or, from 22 April 2014, a child arrangements order) in place immediately before the care order was made is not a relevant child.

In this case, local authorities should include this young person in their OC3 return, but they should be recorded with 'in touch' code of 'RHOM' – Young person returned to live with parents or someone with parental responsibility for a continuous period of 6 months or more. However, if this arrangement then breaks down and the child ceases to live with the person concerned, he/she once again becomes a 'relevant child'.

Former relevant children are defined under Section 23C (1) of the Children Act 1989.

A former relevant child is one who is:

- aged 18 or above,

AND EITHER

- has been a relevant child and would be one if he were under 18,

OR

- immediately before he ceased to be looked after at age 18, was an eligible child.

The definition of eligible children is given below because relevant and former relevant children will have been an eligible child in the past. Please note we are not collecting OC3 information for current eligible children.

An eligible child is:

- a young person aged 16 or 17
- who is looked after
- and has been looked after for at least 13 weeks which began after they reached the age of 14
- and ended after they reached the age of 16.

The 13 weeks can be a continuous period or a series of episodes.

In calculating the 13 weeks, pre-planned short breaks of less than 17 days, (which do not exceed 75 days in any 12 month period), where the child was not in the care of a local authority and afterwards returned to live with someone with parental responsibility should not be included. However, pre-planned short breaks that do not meet this test should be included in the calculation of the 13 weeks.

If a young person was a former relevant child, but then died whilst in care, this child should not be returned in the data.

2.10.3 Local authority in touch

Select the code which most accurately answers the question – was the local authority in touch with this young person? To be counted as ‘in touch’ for the purposes of this data item, there should be “contact” between your local authority

and the young person around 3 months before and one month after the young person's birthday. This may be the 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th or 21st birthday.

The OC3 data collection is designed to monitor the situation of young people when they have left care, rather than their situation immediately before they left care. Because the guidance says that the local authority should be in touch with the young person in the period three months before, to one month after the birthday, it is possible that the local authority will have been in touch with the young person while they were still in care.

If the birthday in question is the 17th birthday, then it should be recorded whether the local authority was in touch with the young person AFTER they had left care.

If the birthday in question is the 18th birthday, then ideally we want to know whether your local authority is in touch with the person AFTER they left care and at some point up to 3 months after their 18th birthday. The accommodation and activity should reflect the most up to date information you have available up to the age of 18 years and 3 months.

If your local authority is in contact more than once during the relevant time period, the most up to date information on the last occasion of contact should be recorded for activity and accommodation.

Statutory guidance is clear that the Personal Adviser (PA) must have regular face to face contact with every care leaver they support. The pathway plan must set out expectations for the PA to see the care leaver and, if relevant, arrangements for staying in touch in other ways, which could include regular exchanges of text messages, emails and phone conversations between the PA and the young person. Further guidance on keeping in touch is given in chapter 4 of the Planning Transitions to Adulthood Guidance for Care Leavers.

If your local authority has contacted a young person, and the young person has responded by stating that they have no desire to supply your local authority with any information, and do not want to be contacted by your local authority again, this should be coded as REFU - "young person refuses contact".

Similarly, if the young person has moved outside the local authority boundary and has chosen not to tell the local authority where they have gone, you still need to have been in communication with the young person to be able to count them as "in touch".

Where a young person has previously been receiving Leaving Care Services but has now decided that they no longer require a service, this should be coded as NREQ – "young person no longer requires services".

Note, if the young person died (since leaving care) following their relevant birthday in the collection year, the information as at their last birthday should be provided including whether they were in touch or not at that point. If the young person died before their relevant birthday in the collection year, the code “DIED” should be used. If a young person died whilst in care, OC3 information is not required.

A new code was added to the 2014-15 collection to identify children who have returned to live with parents or someone with parental responsibility for a period of more than 6 months. These children are no longer ‘relevant children’ so the ‘in touch’ code used should be RHOM. However, if this arrangement then breaks down and the young person ceases to live with the person concerned, he/she once again becomes a ‘relevant child’ and ‘RHOM’ should not be used.

Codeset for “In Touch”

YES	Yes
NO	No
DIED	Died after leaving care
REFU	Young person refuses contact
NREQ	Young person no longer requires services
RHOM	Young person returned to live with parents or someone with parental responsibility for a continuous period of 6 months or more

2.10.4 Contact through a third party

Contact through a third party is acceptable if you are satisfied that this represents a genuine exchange of information between the care leaver and your local authority. It is your responsibility to judge whether such contact is sufficient to qualify for definition as ‘in touch’. For example, if someone mentions that they have met the young person in passing and the young person appeared well, then this is not defined as ‘in touch’. However, if a third person passes a note from the young person to your local authority, then this would be classified as being ‘in touch’.

Contact through a third party who is working with the care leaver in a professional capacity is classified as ‘in touch’; for example a young persons’ advisor not directly employed by your local authority. It is expected that contact through a third person who works with care leavers in a professional capacity will be frequent.

2.10.5 Main activity

Record the code that most accurately reflects the young person's main activity status on or around their 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th or 21st birthday if you were in touch with

them. If you were not in touch with the young person but are certain of their activity on their birthday, then please record this. Such examples might include where the young person was in a stable and ongoing activity e.g. posted abroad in the armed services, or where they have retrospectively confirmed that they had remained on an ongoing education course during the period. If you were not in touch with them and do not know their activity, or the young person has died or returned home to live with parents or someone with parental responsibility for a continuous period of 6 months or more (in touch code 'RHOM'), enter 0 (zero).

Normally the young person should be asked what their main activity is. If their response is not clear and it is known that they are involved in more than one of the activity categories listed on the guidance notes, choose the one that is highest in the list. The list is ranked so that in general, if the young person is involved in both education and employment, education will be recorded as the main activity.

Codeset for main activity

F1	Young person engaged full time in higher education (ie studies beyond A level)
P1	Young person engaged part time in higher education (ie studies beyond A level)
F2	Young person engaged full time in education other than higher education
P2	Young person engaged part time in education other than higher education
F3	Young person engaged full time in training or employment
P3	Young person engaged part time in training or employment
G4	Young person not in education, employment or training because of illness or disability
G5	Young person not in education, employment or training: other circumstances
G6	Young person not in education, employment or training due to pregnancy or parenting

Main activity codes: notes and definitions

Please note that if a young person in custody is engaged in a programme of education their activity should be recorded with an activity code that most accurately reflects this, e.g. part-time education. Before 2016 the guidance specified that a young person in custody should have an activity code of G5 (not in education, employment or training).

Full Time:

The activity engages the young person for at least 16 hours a week.

Part Time:

The activity engages the young person for less than 16 hours a week.

F1: Young person engaged full time in higher education (ie studies beyond A level)

'Higher education' means all studies at a higher academic level than A level. This includes degrees, diplomas in higher education, teaching and nursing qualifications, HNDs, ONDs, and BTEC levels 4-5. The educational course does not have to be residential.

P1: Young person engaged part time in higher education (ie studies beyond A level)

'Higher education' means all studies at a higher academic level than A level. This includes degrees, diplomas in higher education, teaching and nursing qualifications, HNDs, ONDs, and BTEC levels 4-5. The educational course does not have to be residential.

F2: Young person engaged full time in education other than higher education

This means all other education not covered by code F1 and P1. The educational course does not have to be residential. This code should be used if the young person has a confirmed offer of a course of higher education but is waiting for the course to start during the time around their birthday.

P2: Young person engaged part time in education other than higher education

This means all other education not covered by code F1 and P1. The educational course does not have to be residential.

F3: Young person engaged full time in training or employment

'Training' includes government-supported training, including Youth Training, New Deal, Training for Work, and National Traineeships. 'Employment' includes paid employment, self-employment, and voluntary unpaid work.

P3: Young person engaged part time in training or employment

'Training' includes government-supported training, including Youth Training, New Deal, Training for Work, and National Traineeships. 'Employment' includes paid employment, self-employment, and voluntary unpaid work.

G4: Young person not in education, employment or training, because of own illness or disability

Refers to young people where none of the above applies, specifically because the young person's own illness or disability has prevented them from participating in any of these activities.

G5: Young person not in education, employment or training (other circumstances)

Refers to young people not covered by any of the other categories. However this should not include young people who are not able to participate in any of these activities because of pregnancy or because they are parents or carers – these young people should be coded under G6.

G6: Young person not in education, employment or training due to pregnancy or parenting

Refers to young people who are not able to participate in any of these activities because of pregnancy, or because they are parents or carers.

2.10.6 Accommodation

The code for accommodation on the 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th or 21st birthday is a two digit alphanumeric code (for example: B1).

- The first digit is alphabetical, and represents the type of accommodation that the young person is living in on or around their 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th or 21st birthday;
- The second digit is numerical, and indicates whether you judge the accommodation to be 'suitable' or 'unsuitable'.
- If you were not in touch with the young person and do not know their accommodation, or the young person has died, or returned home to live with parents or someone with parental responsibility for a continuous period of 6 months or more, (in touch code 'RHOM') enter 0 (zero).

Codeset for type of accommodation

B	With parents or relatives
C	Community home or other form of residential care such as an NHS establishment
D	Semi-independent, transitional accommodation (eg supported hostel, trainer flats); self-contained accommodation with specialist personal assistance support (eg for young people with disabilities, pregnant young women and single parents); and self-contained accommodation with floating support.

E	Supported lodgings (accommodation, usually in a family home, where adults in the “host family” provide formal advice and support).
G	Gone abroad
H	Deported
K	Ordinary lodgings, without formal support.
R	Residence not known
S	No fixed abode / homeless
T	Foyers and similar supported accommodation which combines the accommodation with opportunities for education, training or employment.
U	Independent living, eg independent tenancy of flat, house or bedsit, including local authority or housing association tenancy, or accommodation provided by a college or university. Includes flat sharing.
V	Emergency accommodation (eg night shelter, direct access, emergency hostel)
W	Bed and breakfast
X	In custody
Y	Other accommodation
Z	With former foster carers - where the young person has been fostered and on turning 18 continues to remain with the same carer who had fostered them immediately prior to their reaching legal adulthood, and where the plan for their care involves their remaining with this former foster family for the future. This code should not be used for 17 year old care leavers. If the foster carer is also a relative this code should be used rather than ‘B - with parents or relatives’.

2.10.7 Suitability

We accept that there are no hard and fast rules on whether accommodation is deemed ‘suitable’; the decision will depend on the circumstances of the individual case and you will have to use your judgement.

Codeset for suitability of accommodation

1	Accommodation is considered suitable
2	Accommodation is considered unsuitable

Accommodation is to be regarded as suitable if it provides **safe, secure and affordable provision** for young people. It would generally include short- term accommodation designed to move young people on to stable long- term accommodation, but would exclude emergency accommodation used in a crisis. Accommodation categories B, C, D, E, K, T, and U should usually be considered as

suitable accommodation. Nevertheless there may be individual circumstances where this is not the case.

Accommodation that clearly exposes the person to risk of harm or social exclusion by reason of its location or other factors should be coded as 'unsuitable'.

Accommodation categories S, V and W should usually be considered 'unsuitable'.

Accommodation category X (in custody) must always be considered 'unsuitable'.

Accommodation category Y ('other accommodation') should be judged to be 'suitable' or 'unsuitable' according to the individual circumstances, but our presumption is that mostly it will be 'unsuitable'.

For accommodation categories G, H and R ('gone abroad', 'deported' and 'residence not known'), the standard of accommodation is likely to be unknown, therefore these should be judged 'unsuitable' but will be removed from calculations measuring the percentage of care leavers in suitable/unsuitable accommodation.

Young people who report that they are "staying with friends" will in general be in one of two situations:

- homeless and temporarily staying with friends as an emergency measure. This should be coded as Y2. It should always be regarded as 'unsuitable';
- taking part in an agreed flat-share with friends. Typically there will be a tenancy agreement which names the young person, an agreed rent and agreed period of notice. This should generally be classified under code U, 'independent tenancy'. You should judge separately, according to individual circumstances, whether this is 'suitable' or 'unsuitable'.

Further guidance is also available in Chapter 7 of *Planning Transition To Adulthood* and Schedule 2 in the [Care Leavers \(England\) Regulations 2010](#).

Appendix 1: When childhood immunisations are due

This table is reproduced from the [NHS immunisation information website](#) .

Vaccination checklist

Here's a checklist of the vaccines that are routinely offered to everyone in the UK for free on the NHS, and the age at which you should ideally have them.

2 months

- 5-in-1 (DTaP/IPV/Hib) vaccine – this single jab contains vaccines to protect against five separate diseases: diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough (pertussis), polio and Haemophilus influenzae type b (known as Hib – a bacterial infection that can cause severe pneumonia or meningitis in young children)
- Pneumococcal (PCV) vaccine
- Rotavirus vaccine
- Meningitis B vaccine

3 months

- 5-in-1 (DTaP/IPV/Hib) vaccine, second dose
- Meningitis C vaccine
- Rotavirus vaccine, second dose

4 months

- 5-in-1 (DTaP/IPV/Hib) vaccine, third dose
- Pneumococcal (PCV) vaccine, second dose
- Meningitis B vaccine second dose

12-13 months

- Hib/Men C booster, given as a single jab containing meningitis C (second dose) and Hib (fourth dose)
- Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine, given as a single jab
- Pneumococcal (PCV) vaccine, third dose
- Men B vaccine third dose

2, 3 and 4 years plus school years one and two

- Children's flu vaccine (annual)

From 3 years and 4 months (up to starting school)

- Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine, second dose

- 4-in-1 (DTaP/IPV) pre-school booster, given as a single jab containing vaccines against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough (pertussis) and polio

12-13 years (girls only)

- HPV vaccine, which protects against cervical cancer – two injections given between six months and two years apart

13-18 years

- 3-in-1 (Td/IPV) teenage booster, given as a single jab and contains vaccines against diphtheria, tetanus and polio
- Men ACWY vaccine - is given by a single injection into the upper arm and protects against four different causes of meningitis and septicaemia – meningococcal (Men) A, C, W and Y diseases.

Appendix 2: Substance misuse

This guide document has been written to support local authorities with the data collection in relation to substance misuse. It has also been updated to address some of the issues encountered in the first round of data collection. These are outlined in Section 2 below.

1. Background information

The DfE has lead responsibility for policy on preventing substance misuse among young people, particularly the most vulnerable. Substance misuse and associated problems harm children and young people's welfare and prevent them from achieving their full potential. The strategic guidance document Every Child Matters: Change for Children – Young People and Drugs (2005) sets out proposals to ensure that every young person with increased vulnerability to developing substance misuse problems, has their substance misuse needs identified early on and receives an appropriate service or intervention to prevent the problems escalating.

Where does substance misuse need to be recorded?

Promoting the Health of Children Looked After Guidance, DH (2002) sets out the requirement that every looked after child has a health assessment when they enter into care and that a health plan is set out stating how their health needs will be met. The guidance includes a chapter on young people and drugs as it is a key issue for consideration when assessing the health and wellbeing and safety of children looked after.

Local authorities have a duty to promote and ensure the wellbeing of all children who are looked after by them.

This means that local authorities must put in place arrangements to ensure that every child who is looked after has:

1. His/her health needs fully assessed;
2. A Health Plan which clearly sets out how health needs identified in the assessment will be addressed, including intended outcomes for the child, measurable objectives to achieve the outcome, actions needed to meet the objectives, the person responsible for each action and timescales for achieving this;
3. His/her Health Plan reviewed.

Information from the health assessment forms the Health Plan which is recorded within the child's Care Plan as part of the assessment, planning, intervention and

review process for all children looked after. It is anticipated that problems with substance misuse will be identified as part of the health assessment or, if concerns have come from a carer, addressed as part of the assessment. Proposed interventions will be recorded within the Care Plan and progress and outcomes of interventions identified at the review.

The Integrated Children's System framework captures all the information about individual children which is required for management or performance indicators on the review record from which relevant information is aggregated.

The Health Assessment should be carried out by a suitably qualified medical practitioner and should promote the current and future health of the child or young person who is looked after and not focus solely on the detection of ill health. Health Assessments should cover a range of issues beyond those of physical health which include developmental health and emotional well being.

Increased vulnerability to substance misuse

Evidence suggests that children in care are four times more likely than their peers to smoke, use alcohol and misuse drugs. (Meltzer et. al. 2003). Children looked after and young people who have experienced parental drug and alcohol misuse may view excessive drugs and/or alcohol use as 'normal' (Ward and others 2003, Newburn and Pearson 2002).

Substance misuse (what constitutes a problem?)

The Health Advisory Service (HAS) report (1996) states 'one off and experimental use of drugs and alcohol cannot in itself be seen as indicative of having caused actual harm or being related to any personal disorder'. In other words the fact that a young person has taken a substance should not lead to the automatic conclusion that there is a problem or condition to be treated. However, it is essential to recognise that all substance taking by young people carries potential harm.

Recent guidance published by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) offers the following definition of substance misuse as 'intoxication by – or regular excessive consumption of and/or dependence on – psychoactive substances, leading to social, psychological, physical or legal problems. It includes problematic use of both legal and illegal drugs (including alcohol when used in combination with other substances)'.

Drugs, alcohol and substances

In this guide document, the term 'drug' is used to refer to any psychotropic substance, including illegal drugs, illicit use of prescription drugs and volatile

substances. Young people's drug taking is often inextricably linked with the consumption of alcohol. Therefore the term 'substance' refers to both drugs and alcohol but not tobacco.

A range of interventions

Identification and assessment

The identification and assessment of substance misuse must take place within the context of the assessment of the young person's overall needs and not as a standalone activity. Therefore the range of interventions made available to the young person should meet the holistic assessment of need. There are 3 possible options following the Initial Assessment process

1. No need is identified but the assessment process is recorded;
2. Need is identified and a Care Plan is agreed, substance misuse being one issue which the young person requires support with and can be provided by a generic practitioner;
3. Substance misuse is identified requiring an intervention from a specialist worker focussing on a substance misuse based Care plan.

Wherever possible, support should be provided 'in house' by staff known to the young person ie Social Workers, carers and other staff. This should include support for the identified substance misuse problem and other problems identified in the assessment.

What is an intervention?

Intervention can include such activities as information, advice and guidance, brief interventions, positive activities, therapeutic support, targeted support including support with a range of problems which are causing the young person difficulties and may be exacerbating the young person's substance misuse ie family contact, placement stability, school attendance, emotional and mental health problems.

Interventions can cover a wide range of information, advice, support and services. The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) recently published guidance on 'community based interventions' to reduce substance misuse among vulnerable young people. Details of the guidance document can be obtained NICE:

Some young people with more serious substance misuse problems will need more specialist services. These services should be well known to the Children's Services and clear referral protocols established between the department and the specialist agency.

2. Data collection and associated issues

The publication of substance misuse related data for the first time in 2006–2007 highlighted the need for more clarity around a number of important issues. These include:

Children looked after aged under 10

Information on substance misuse should be collected from all children regardless of age. However, in line with understanding of treatment data which suggests that substance misuse problems develop from the age of 10 onwards, calculation of the national percentage of children looked after with substance misuse problems will be expressed from the number of LAC aged 10–17, rather than those aged 0–17.

Recording and counting process

The publication of substance misuse related data highlighted some anomalies in the data collection process. In some areas the numbers accepting or refusing interventions exceeded the numbers identified with problems.

For purpose of clarity, every young person identified with a drug or alcohol related problem should be recorded once, irrespective of the number of times they have been offered interventions over the 12 month period. The database will be amended to reject incidents where numbers do not add up thus allowing local authorities to recheck figures.

Placements outside the local authority area

The responsible authority is required to ensure that all children looked after receive a Health Assessment in line with statutory requirements, irrespective of where they are placed. It is expected that problems with substance misuse will be identified and/or addressed within the Health Assessment and actions recorded on the health plan within the Integrated Children's System.

Appendix 3: Guidance on data collection on the emotional health of looked after children

Please read through this guidance carefully. It has been designed in such a way that it should answer most questions that you may have regarding the completion of the strengths and difficulties questionnaire and collection of the data.

Local authorities should make sure that the full guidance is disseminated to everyone in the local authority who is involved in the SDQ process. It is particularly important that social workers have copies of the guidance as well as those who are dealing with the data returns so that they have all the background information they need to understand the process.

Introduction

From April 2008 all local authorities in England were required to provide information on the emotional and behavioural health of children and young people in their care. These data are collected by local authorities through a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and a summary figure for each child (the total difficulties score) is submitted to the Department for Education through the SSDA903 data return.

This document explains the background for this data collection and provides guidance on how the data are collected. It also provides further information on how the SDQ can be further used to support the emotional and behavioural health of looked after children. Finally there are some “frequently asked questions” that you might find useful.

History of the SDQ collection

Looked-after children have significantly poorer mental health problems than their peers. Foster carers frequently report that there are problems associated with the emotional wellbeing and mental health of the young people in their care. Evidence suggests that looked after children are nearly 5 times more likely to have a mental health disorder than all children.

SDQ scores became part of the SSDA903 return from 2009. There was a new local government indicator (NI58) developed. In this way the mental health of children in care was reflected in local authority performance management arrangements. While this indicator was withdrawn in 2010 the Department continues to collect and publish information on the psychological and emotional health of looked after children. This is because it is the main way in which to gain an understanding at national and local level of the emotional wellbeing of looked-after children over time.

How to use this guidance

The information contained within this guidance needs to be read and thoroughly understood. Using the information contained within the guidance, local authorities will be able to set up a procedure that will; collect the information; inform all participants what their role is and why it is important; collate the information and send it to the DfE as part of the SSDA903 return; and use the information to develop their strategies to identify and support looked after children who have emotional and behavioural problems.

Local authorities that had particular difficulties in previous years in returning reliable data should be satisfied that there are robust systems in place to ensure that this data return is as accurate as it can possibly be.

Action for local authorities

Local authorities **are required** to ensure a short behavioural screening questionnaire (SDQ) is completed for each of their looked after children between the ages of 4 and 16 inclusive. **Not completing a questionnaire in accordance with this guidance is not an option unless there are very good reasons why it is not possible.** For the purposes of this collection the questionnaire must be completed by the main carer, preferably at the time of the child's statutory annual health assessment. The authority will need to distribute and explain how to use the questionnaires to each carer.

The local authority is responsible for;

- the collection of completed questionnaires;
- marking the SDQ;
- storing the data;
- and returning the data to the DfE as part of the SSDA903 data collection.

The authority will need to collect and score each questionnaire in order to obtain a single score (the Total Difficulties Score) for each of their looked after children. Scores for looked after children who have been continuously looked after for at least one year should be submitted for each child as part of the SSDA903 return. Details of what the local authority and the main carer should do are set out in the questions below. Additionally specific actions are detailed in Appendix A.

What is the strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ)?

The SDQ is a short behavioural screening questionnaire. It has five sections that cover details of emotional difficulties; conduct problems; hyperactivity or inattention; friendships and peer groups; and also positive behaviour, plus an “impact supplement” to assist in the prediction of emotional health problems. The SDQ has been internationally validated and is appropriate for all black, minority and ethnic (BME) groups. Alternative language versions of the SDQ can be downloaded from www.sdqinfo.com.

Which element of the questionnaire do I use?

Local authorities are required for the purpose of the SSSA903 statistical return to use the 2-page ‘main carer’ questionnaire element of the SDQ, attached at annex A. However, although the results don’t feed into the SSSA903 annual collection, if social workers want to triangulate this with the views of the child or young person and his/her teacher they may want to use the SDQ questionnaires designed for young people and teachers in addition to the one which the main carer should complete.

Which children are included in the data collection?

For the purpose of the SSSA903 data collection, local authorities must return a single ‘Total Difficulties Score’, ranging from 0 to 40, for all looked after children aged between four and 16 (inclusive) at the date of their latest assessment and who have been looked after for at least 12 months on 31st March.

However, to ensure that data are available for this group of children, the SDQ should be completed for all of the authority’s looked after children within this age range (ie aged between 4 and 16 inclusive) as it is not possible to predict in advance which children will spend a year or more in care.

Local authorities should:

- include in the SSSA903 statistical return all young people who were under 17 at the time of their SDQ assessment even though they became 17 between their assessment taking place and 31st March. For example, a young person aged 16 who had the SDQ carer assessment at their annual health review in September and become 17 in the following January. We are collecting the information for this group of children so that we can distinguish between two groups: 1) those who had SDQ assessments during the year and who were still 16 by 31 March; and 2) those who were 16 on the date of their assessment but turned 17 during the year. Given that the SDQ assessment could be made at any time in the year, it is very possible for a child to be assessed the day before his/her 17th birthday and we would like to capture this information);

- include in the statistical return children who have recently become 4 (as at the 31st of March) but who have not yet had an SDQ assessment. They should be recorded as not having a return completed because they were under 4 at the date of the latest assessment (see below);
- exclude children who are looked after under an agreed series of short term placements.

Who completes the questionnaire?

The questionnaire must be completed by the child's main carer. For most looked after children and young people this will be either a foster carer or their residential care worker where the child is in residential accommodation. However it is possible for the questionnaire to be completed by a parent or other family member if they are looking after the child.

What if a child has changed carers?

For children who have changed carers during the course of the year, local authorities should assess which carer is best placed to carry out the assessment.

What training or guidance should social workers offer to carers about completing the questionnaire?

The carers' SDQ questionnaire is designed in such a way that no formal training should be necessary. It is sufficiently straightforward to enable them to complete the questions easily. However, the carer needs to feel confident that they know what they are being asked to do and how to do it. If they are unclear about what they need to do, then this could affect the quality of the data returned. Where a carer has difficulties in understanding or completing the questionnaire the local authority may want to offer assistance, eg by discussing the questionnaire with the carer.

Whoever gives the questionnaire to the carer to complete (this will usually be the social worker) should:

- explain what the questionnaire is for and why it is important for them to complete it;
- check that they understand what they need to do and by when;
- explain that it is important to be honest in their assessments and that the SDQ is a screening tool to help the child and is not an assessment of or reflection of how well they care for the child;

- make sure the carer knows the child well enough to be able to give meaningful insights in responding to questions;
- agree a completion and return date for the questionnaire;
- make sure the carer knows to whom the completed questionnaire should be returned.

When is the questionnaire completed?

It can be completed at any point during the year. However, to help ensure that the questionnaire is completed and to reduce the administration required by the local authority we recommend that the questionnaire is completed as part of the child or young person's statutory annual health assessment. For those young people who have recently come in to care, the carer will need time to establish a relationship with the child before they will be in a position to carry out the assessment. Local authorities (usually this will be the social worker) will need to make a judgement on a case by case basis. Information is required for the SSDA903 returns for those children and young people who have been in continuous care for at least 12 months (as at 31st March).

What arrangements do we need to make for completing the questionnaire?

Local authorities (usually the social worker) should make arrangements for issuing the SDQ to the child's main carer. This should be accompanied by an explanation of how it should be completed and who within the authority it should be returned to (completed questionnaires should not be sent directly to the DfE and this needs to be made clear to carers).

The SDQ requires carers to read a series of statements and judge how well it describes the young person by ticking one of three or four boxes for each question. Completion should take between 5 to 10 minutes.

Local authorities should ensure that the carer has sufficient time to complete the questionnaire in advance of the health check (we recommend one month). Local authorities are responsible for ensuring that the questionnaire is completed and returned for each eligible child or young person.

What if the questionnaire cannot be completed?

Completion of the SDQ is straightforward and there should only be rare exceptions where it cannot be completed. Having learning difficulties should not debar a child from having a questionnaire completed that relates to them. However where a looked after child has disabilities which mean that it would not be possible or

appropriate to complete a questionnaire then that should be noted (see SDQ3 below). Where a score cannot be obtained, the data return does contain a field so that the local authority can give the reason for this. The SSSDA903 data collection uses the following codes for this purpose.

- SDQ1 - No form returned as child was aged under 4 or over 17 at date of latest assessment;
- SDQ2 - Carer refused to complete and return the questionnaire;
- SDQ3 - Not possible to complete the questionnaire due to severity of the child's disabilities;
- SDQ4 - Other
- SDQ5 - Child or young person refuses to allow an SDQ to be completed¹.

The SDQ is a screening tool to assess whether the child or young person has, or may develop, emotional or behavioural difficulties. Whilst the primary carer SDQ does not require input from the child or young person we expect it to be undertaken with the knowledge of the young person involved.

What does the carer and local authority do with the completed questionnaire?

Following completion of the questionnaire by the child's carer, they should return it to the local authority.

The local authority should then calculate the child's Total Difficulties Score using the scoring sheet attached at annex B. The Total Difficulties Score is generated by totalling the scores of the emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity and peer problems sub-scores; it does not include the pro-social score – do not include this in the calculation.

Local authorities should first generate the child's score for each of the four relevant sub-score domains (five questions in each) and then generate the Total Difficulties Score (between 0-40).

When scoring the SDQ, authorities must take care to ensure that the score awarded matches the correct question from the SDQ. For manual scoring this process is aided by transparent overlays, attached at annex C, which should be printed or photocopied on transparent film.

What help is there with the scoring? Free [computer scoring and report-writing software](#) is available for electronic marking of the SDQ. The software is available on

request. This software uses Microsoft Access and can be used to export results for use on an authority's management information system.

What is the end product?

Following marking of the SDQ, local authorities must keep a record of the Total Difficulties Score (ie the overall score ranging from 0 – 40) for each relevant child and submit these as part of the SSSDA903 data collection.

Using the SDQ as a screening tool

For children and young people in new placements, we recommend that the SDQ is used to help decision-making about links with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Referral to specialist mental health assessment and treatment should be considered in the context of the existing assessment of the health, social and educational needs of children and young people as part of placing a child or young person in care.

Social workers should consider the need to make a referral to specialist CAMHS or, where they exist, specialist teams that have been set up in partnership with local mental health providers. Where social workers are unsure of the need for referral, or how to make one, they should seek advice on local care pathways and CAMHS eligibility criteria. CAMHS may also be a useful source of expertise in the use and interpretation of the SDQ. The local CAMHS Partnership will want to be informed of the levels of mental health difficulties in the children in care population. This information is valuable in making thorough local needs assessments.

While children who are looked after under an agreed series of short term placements are excluded from this indicator, social workers may want to consider whether these children might otherwise benefit from having an SDQ assessment. In such circumstances you would need to discuss this with those who have parental responsibility for the child.

The full SDQ also includes a questionnaire for teachers and a self-reporting questionnaire for children and young people who are aged 11-16. While these are not required as part of this data collection, local authorities may wish to use these questionnaires to improve their understanding of the needs of their looked after children, particularly to find out how the child or young person feels about his/her own emotional wellbeing. Further information can be found at www.sdqinfo.com.

The SDQ will provide predictions about how likely it is that a child or young person has significant mental health problems – unlikely, possible or probable – to do this it must include the “impact” questions on page 2 of the questionnaire. We recommend that if the main carer SDQ suggests a possible or probable problem that an SDQ is

completed by a teacher who knows the young person and the young person themselves if they are aged 11 or over. The allocated social worker may wish to discuss any problem areas highlighted by the SDQ with the carer and young person. However, the SDQ is only a screening tool. Where a problem is identified the local authority should use a diagnostic tool such as the Development and Well-Being Assessment (DAWBA) to enable an appropriate intervention to be identified and to consider a referral to local voluntary or statutory mental health services.

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Contacts

If you require further assistance please raise a [service request](#).

Frequently asked question on SDQ scores

What is my role in the SDQ process?

Local authority looked after children health official

Your general role is as the person responsible for administering the completion of the SDQ as described above. However it is up to local authorities to determine exactly who does what.

It is particularly important that the carer feels comfortable with the task they are being asked to do and that they have sufficient knowledge of the young person in order that they can confidently answer the questions. The questionnaire should be accompanied by a note explaining what is required and offering guidance as necessary (eg you can use information contained in this guidance) as well as a contact name/number if the carer is experiencing particular difficulties in completing it.

When the SDQ is returned it is important to note that all questions have been completed as missing questions can invalidate the score. One particular problem has been an abnormal number of zero scores. In the general population we would expect an average score of 8.

While it is certainly the case that there are children who will have a zero score these should be few. If you find you are receiving more of these zero scores than expected then you will need to check that the SDQ is being completed correctly. From 2009/10 there is a new validation rule in the SSSDA903 return that will flag up when an SDQ score of zero has been recorded. The record will be in error but if the local authority is sure that the score is correct, then they can contact the DfE to bypass the error. This will ensure that an SDQ score of zero is recorded only when the score is actually zero as opposed to when a score is not known.

Carer

Completing the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire is about assessing the child to see if they have any problems that may indicate a potential emotional/ behavioural difficulty. This is very important as picking up such problems early can mean that support is put in place to help the child.

As a carer you will be ideally placed to answer the questions that the SDQ asks as you have that day-to-day knowledge about the young person. The Questionnaire has been designed to enable it to be answered by all parents/carers. However it does mean that you need to know the young person. If you feel you have not known the young person long enough to provide an answer please tell your local authority contact as there may be someone in a better position to complete the questionnaire.

Some young people have indicated that their views about how they are feeling are not taken into account enough because the national data collection requires only the main carer element of the SDQ to be completed. It is important to be clear that the carers' responses to the questionnaire are their assessment of how they see the emotional and behavioural health of the child. The questionnaire must not be completed in collaboration with the carer – to do so would invalidate the responses. However, any carer completing the questionnaire should be satisfied that at the time they complete the questionnaire they:

- are not basing their answers on the child's behaviour on a particular day(s) which will result in a skewed score that doesn't reflect how the child is most of the time.
- have an understanding of how the child or young person perceives their behaviour and emotional wellbeing
- talk to the child's or young person's social worker or lead health official where they know that their responses to questions differ significantly from what they know to be the child's or young person's views about whether or not the social worker should ask the young person to complete an SDQ if they want to.

The SDQ requires you to read a series of statements and judge how well it describes the young person you look after by ticking one of three or four boxes for each question. Completion should not take too long - about 5 to 10 minutes on average, although it occasionally may take a little longer. However it is important that you understand the questions asked within the SDQ and how the young person in your care is feeling. Without knowing how they feel you may find it difficult to accurately answer the questions. If you have any problems completing the form please contact the person in the local authority who sent you the form and talk through any difficulty you may have. If necessary they can assist you in completing the form (however it is important that you answer the specific questions). There are versions of the SDQ in alternative languages if that would be helpful – please ask your local authority contact about this.

The completed SDQ should be sent back to the local authority (they should tell you who to send it back to). Once they have completed the scoring process this information will feed into the annual health review for the child you look after. Any further action will depend on the score obtained and any other information as discussed at the annual health review.

Isn't this just more internal administrative burden?

Collecting data for the sake of it? Evidence clearly suggests that looked after children are nearly 5 times more likely to have a mental health disorder than all children. However we currently have no national measure to identify the extent of this. The white paper Care Matters: Time for Change highlighted the need to improve the mental health of children and young people in care. The first step in order to make improvements is to identify the scale of the problem and the SDQ is the tool which we will use to obtain this. While this will inevitably mean that there is a degree of administrative burden in obtaining information for this new indicator, nevertheless the benefits in being able to identify problems for these vulnerable children an overriding consideration.

So what will local authorities get out of this?

Of primary importance to local authorities (given their role as the corporate parents) is that undertaking an SDQ questionnaire early in a child's care history will quickly highlight the likelihood that the child either has, or could develop significant mental health problems. This should then assist in accessing/ commissioning appropriate intervention to support the child. In addition local authorities will be able to build up management information regarding the scale of the emotional/ behavioural problems of looked after children in their area which will therefore help inform the appropriate levels of service provision. In the longer term, data from SDQ returns will give an

indication on how effective the service provision provided is in meeting the needs of looked after children.

How does this link with the Common Assessment Framework (CAF)?

Should there be any particular individual case where a CAF is being implemented for a looked after child, then the SDQ could be one of the tools that will help inform that assessment.

Can the SDQ be used as a commissioning tool?

This is a matter for the local authority to decide. Guidance recommends that the SDQ is used to help decision-making about links with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Referral to specialist mental health assessment and treatment should be considered in the context of the existing assessment of the health, social and educational needs of children and young people as part of placing a child or young person in care. Social workers should consider the need to make a referral to specialist CAMHS or, where they exist, specialist teams that have been set up in partnership with local mental health providers. Where social workers are unsure of the need for referral, or how to make one, they should seek advice on local care pathways and CAMHS eligibility criteria.

Why only the parent (carer) assessment? Why not use the young person/teacher assessment as well?

For the purposes of obtaining information to provide data that will inform this indicator, using the parent/carer questionnaire is sufficient. However this does not mean that local authorities cannot use the full range of the SDQ if they so wish and our guidance does recommend that both the teacher (and where appropriate the young person) questionnaire be used if the parent/carer questionnaire indicates that there are concerns.

Should we obtain consent from the young person?

One of the options for not completing a questionnaire is where a young person has refused to allow one to be completed. The SDQ is a screening tool to assess whether the child or young person has, or may develop, emotional or behavioural difficulties. Whilst the primary carer SDQ does not require input from the child or young person we expect it to be undertaken with the knowledge of the young person involved. How local authorities wish to approach this issue is up to them, but a formal "consent" process may be overly bureaucratic. Undertaking the SDQ should be part of the process by which the health and wellbeing of all looked after children are monitored and assessed and most young people will understand the importance of this when it is explained to them.

Do we include young people who are 16?

Yes, guidance says that the SDQ should be completed for all looked after children aged 4-16 inclusive. When compiling returns to the Department include those young people who were under 17 at the time of the assessment but who became 17 between the assessment taking place and 31st March. We are collecting the information for this group of children so that we can distinguish between two groups; those who had SDQ assessments during the year and who were still 16 by 31 March; and those who were 16 on the date of their assessment but turned 17 during the year. Given that the assessment could be made at any time in the year, it is very possible for a child to be assessed just before their 17th birthday and we would like to capture this information.

Who should complete the questionnaire if the young person is in independent living?

There are a number of options that could be used and would depend on individual circumstances:

1. Ask the previous carer to complete the questionnaire. There may be a number of problems with this, too much time may have gone by (it could be almost a year), there may be a relationship problem between carer and young person (young person may refuse permission to have it completed). However there may be times when this is the most appropriate way forward.
2. Social worker to complete the questionnaire. Once again this may not be appropriate in all cases but where there is a relationship between social worker and young person that means the SW could reasonably answer the questions then this would be acceptable.
3. Another "responsible" adult (but not a teacher). It may be the case in certain circumstances that a looked after young person has a trusted adult in their lives other than an ex-carer or social worker that is close enough to the young person to be able to complete the questionnaire. If all are agreed then this could be an acceptable alternative.
4. If none of these options are appropriate then the questionnaire cannot be completed and a note to that effect should be put on the data return for that young person.

What training do carers need to carry out this exercise?

No specific training should be needed in order to undertake this exercise. Foster carers do not require specialised knowledge as the questionnaire was designed so that all parents can complete it. Both the set of 25 questions plus the impact questions only require that the foster carer has known the child for a sufficient period of time, and has been responsible for their day-to-day welfare, so that they are able to make an informed judgement regarding any behaviour displayed (much as any parent would of their children). Guidance does suggest that the questionnaire given to the foster carers should be accompanied by an explanation of how it should be completed. Additionally, where a carer has difficulties in understanding or completing the questionnaire the local authority may want to offer assistance, eg by discussing the questionnaire with the carer.

What if the carer feels this is an exercise directed at their ability to care for a child?

It should be made very clear that the purpose of completing the SDQ is not about monitoring the ability of the carer to care for the child. This exercise is about assessing the child to see if they are presenting with any problems that when taken together may indicate a potential emotional/ behavioural difficulty, ie this is an assessment of the child not the carer. It is the carer who is best placed to answer the questions contained in the questionnaire as they have that day-to-day knowledge that others do not. We are collecting this data so that nationally we have an overall indication of the level of difficulty there might be in the looked after population and this data will inform the national indicator.

What does the “total difficulty score” mean in practice?

Annex B of the Guidance gives an explanation of interpreting the scores obtained. The scoring range is between 0-40. On an individual basis a score of 13 or below is normal and 17 and above is a cause of concern (between 14-16 is borderline). For local authorities, their overall average score will give an indication of the level of "concern" there is across the local authority. From a strategic point of view a high score will mean that more looked after children are displaying such problems. This is useful management information as it will give an indication of where resources may need to be allocated. Over time it will also give an indication of how effective services put in place are addressing these issues. For individuals, information from the SDQ can lead to considering possible further investigation or intervention. Over time records can show a child's progress - whether difficulties identified remain or, if appropriate interventions have been put in place, whether they have eased.

Can it be used as a basis for discussion with Virtual School Heads and the child's education setting about educational needs in relation to Pupil Premium funding?

It is up to Virtual School Heads to determine how they will allocate Pupil Premium funding, which they manage. Pupil Premium funding to their looked after children. While the SDQ is mainly a tool to help identify emotional and behavioural concerns, it could also feed into any assessment for Pupil Premium funding if Virtual School Heads found that useful.

What about 17/18 year olds?

The SDQ has been designed specifically for those young people who are aged 4 16 inclusive. However, if the local authority wishes to continue to use the questionnaire for those who are 17 and beyond then that is a decision for them to take. Local authorities will need to consider whether the questions asked continue to be relevant for those who are 17+.



Department
for Education

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Reference: DFE-00300-2015



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